International Labour Organization

Reclaiming space for workers in the 21st century

A literature review on workers' centres

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The present document is the final deliverable of a collaboration contract between the four authors as suppliers and the International Labour Organization (ILO) for a call for a "literature review to a position paper on workers' centres from a fundamental principles and rights at work lens". The principal aim of the contract was to write a report in the form of a literature review that contributes to the knowledge of workers' centres for migrant workers across the world where written evidence is available. The collected evidence is interpreted in order to explain why, how and where workers' centres have developed over time.

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Abbreviations

ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities
AFL-CIO	The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
AFWA	Asian Floor Wage
AMUMRA	Asociación de Mujeres Unidas Migrantes y Refugiadas de Argentina (Association of United Migrant and Refugee Women in Argentina)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATKI-HK	Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers
CCC	Clean Clothes Campaign
CEACR	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations
CSOs	Civil society organizations
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
CTEP	Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular
ECVC	European Coordination Via Campesina
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EPZ	Export processing zone
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
GAFWU	Garment and Fashion Workers Union
GATWU	Garment and Textile Workers Union
GAWU	Garment and Allied Workers Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GFA	Global Framework Agreements
GSC(s)	Global supply chain(s)
GVC(s)	Global value chain(s)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITGLWF	International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer
LRS	Labour Research Service
LRS	Labour Research Service
MAP	Movement Advancement Project
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFMW	Mission for Migrant Workers
MFMW	Mission for Migrant Workers

MME	Africa–EU Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NDLON	National Day Laborers Organizing Network
NDWA	National Domestic Worker Alliance
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPO	Non-profit organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QIZ(s)	Qualified industrial Zone(s)
SBMI	Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia (Indonesian Migrant Workers Union)
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TD	Territorio Doméstico
TSA	Temporary staff agencies
TSAs	Temporary staff agencies
TU(s)	Trade union(s)
TWC2	Transient Workers Count Too
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
WC(s)	Workers' centre(s)

Foreword

Workers' centres can play an important role in creating more enabling environments that respect fundamental principles and rights at work in areas where, and for people for whom, such freedoms are restricted. For example, many types of workers do not enjoy full freedom of association as established under the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948 (No. 87). The nature of their jobs leaves them limited possibilities to come together with other workers outside the scope of their jobs, and laws may exclude their occupations from freedom to associate. Similarly, they may not enjoy rights covered by the ILO's Convention on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), 1958 (No. 111) and ILO's Convention on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining, 1949 (No. 98). Indeed, if such rights are guaranteed in national legislation, they tend to exclude migrant workers, informal women workers, indigenous populations, minorities and/or others, for whom special, less favourable conditions exist either by default or by design.

Traditional unions often find it challenging to work in such contexts. They are often not used to working with such populations. Cultural, linguistic and other barriers may exist, or there may simply be limited familiarity with the occupations of such workers. Yet workers' centres can help in facilitating the roles of unions and of workers themselves in coming together and building awareness about the commonalities of the challenges they face. Workers' centres cannot be understood outside the context of the industrial relations that govern labour practices in the regions where they exist. It is therefore important to analyse the history of relationships between workers and contractors and between managers and employers in the specific locations where workers' centres are situated. This calls for both a social and spatial analysis of labour relations.

The purpose of this study is to review the global literature that has been produced on workers' centres and the contexts where they emerged and to analyse how and why they were established, the challenges they faced and good practices that can inspire others. This study is part of a series of papers prepared by the Work in Freedom programme on Workers' Centres. For more information about the different roles of workers' centres in supporting fundamental principles and rights at work, please see: Worker Centers from a Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Lens, 2020.

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1. Introduction: Migrant workers, fundamental rights and workers' centres across the world

According to the ILO's Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers (2018),[1] in 2017, of a total of 258 million international migrants, migrant workers numbered 164 million.[2] In 2020, the official United Nations (UN) figure of total international migrants rose to 281 million, with 48 per cent estimated to be women and girls and 73 per cent estimated to be migrant workers. The term "international migrants" includes all persons of working age who are usual residents of a country, and who are citizens of another country or whose place of birth is located in another country, while "international migrant workers" are those persons who have labour attachments in the country where they currently find themselves, irrespective of the initial purpose of their migration. They include a wide range of categories of workers, including frontier workers, seasonal workers, itinerant workers, self-employed workers, foreign domestic workers, working or work-seeking refugees and asylum seekers, forcibly displaced persons and persons trafficked across international borders for forced labour or labour exploitation.[3]

The ILO distinguishes between "migrants of working age" (15 years of age and over) in general and "migrant workers" in particular. The latter would consist of those migrants of working age who are either employed or unemployed but are, presumably, searching for a job. The gender share among migrant workers is significant: 58.4 per cent are male and 41.6 per cent female (ILO 2018, 7). More remarkably, all migrant workers represent a higher participation in the global labour force than non-migrants, which, in the case of women, amounts to 63.5 per cent versus 48.1 per cent respectively (ILO 2018, 12). In particular, "young and older female migrant workers are slightly more likely to be found in low-income countries than their male counterparts" (ILO 2018, xi).

The increase in the number of international migrants was 11 per cent (ILO 2018, ix) only between 2013 and 2017. Otherwise, the numbers of international migrants have substantially soared over the last five decades. By 1970, the estimated number of international migrants was 85 million people, representing 2.3 per cent of the world's population (IOM 2020, 21). Therefore, even though data sets are not comparable, there is a significant increase between 1970 and 2020. In contrast, internal migrations and displacements within countries were even higher: an estimated 740 million in 2009 (IOM 2020, 21).

According to their geographical distribution, most migrant workers (68 per cent) are employed in high-income countries, while the rest are divided into upper middle-income countries (19 per cent), lower middle-income countries (10 per cent) and low-income countries (3 per cent) (ILO 2018, xi, 45–47). The ILO estimates that almost 61 per cent of migrant workers are found in three sub-regions, namely in North America (23 per cent); in Northern, Southern and Western Europe (23.9 per cent); and in the Arab countries (13.9 per cent). Other sub-regions that host more than five per cent of migrant workers include Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and the Pacific, as well as Central and Western Asia. The Arab states stand out for their large share of migrant workers in relation to the whole labour force (41 per cent), followed by North America (21 per cent) and Northern, Southern and Western Europe (18 per cent) (ILO 2018, 14–16). It is also the Arab states region that has the highest labour force participation rate of migrants as opposed to that of non-migrants (75.4 per cent).

1 ILO, *ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers, Results and Methodology* (second edition), 2018.

2 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *International Migration 2020 Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER.A/452), 2020.

3 International Labour Office, Department of Statistics, *Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration* (ICLS/20/2018/Guidelines), 2018.

These figures allow an understanding of some of the general trends and the uneven conditions of the changing international division of labour due to the increasing flows of international migrations. However, they do not reveal much about the various forms of labour abuse that migrant workers experience and their contribution to workers' struggles. Besides, the commodification of labour migration as a factor subordinate to the contingent necessities of local (or regional) labour markets makes millions of people who do not move under high-skilled, well-off and free conditions increasingly vulnerable to irregular migration, forced labour, lack of protection and, therefore, abusive working conditions within large tracts of the global economy (Anderson 2010; Xiang 2012). This inevitably implies a deeper inequality in the bargaining power and unionising capacity of migrant workers compared to a local workforce.

Hence, when formally employed, migrant workers get lower wages or are paid below the minimum wage, have to work longer hours, are assigned to more inconvenient shifts and to less qualified positions, experience fewer opportunities for promotion, and in general, suffer worse working conditions and regulations as compared to the native-born labour force (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013). Although some migrant workers may run small businesses and be part of vibrant, ethnic economic enclaves, their racial, religious or cultural conditions add to the various grounds of discrimination that most migrants face. In addition, migrant women experience intersectional oppressions at work which are manifested in particular, gendered labour niches and may impact the "global chains of care" when these workers are unable to sustain the livelihood of their families in their places of origin (Hierofani 2016; Wright 2006).

These conditions are intertwined with the increasing casualization and precarization of a great deal of the working class in most capitalist economies since the 1970s. These conditions were the result of flexible accumulation regimes, the expansion of the world market and overwhelming, neoliberal policies that eroded many of the welfare benefits and institutional basis of collective bargaining when they were in force (Carroll et al. 2019). The decline of trade unions' affiliations, negotiating power and political impact followed next, although previous research has underscored more nuanced understandings of this phenomenon.

Nowadays, less than one in five workers is a member of a trade union, which is in stark contrast to the estimate of one in three workers being part of a union in the late 1980s (OECD 2018). However, union density varies very much among countries: only 7 per cent of workers are unionized in Indonesia and 8 per cent in Turkey, while 35 per cent are union members in Italy and 42 per cent in China. These figures also suggest a divide between countries where unions are controlled by the government, countries where unionization is forbidden or violently repressed by governments, and those where unions can still represent workers' interests, confronting capitalist firms. Among the different explanations of the decline of labour unions' (flexible forms of capital accumulation, technological and organizational changes, institutional reforms of the job market and the collective bargaining system, labour outsourcing that enables the hiring of precarious migrant workers, etc.), the representation gap that leaves the racialized, gendered and informal working class outside the unions is a very persuasive one (Healy et al. 2004).

Hence, through the last five decades, migrant workers have become both a challenge and an opportunity for the revitalization of labour unions (Frege & Kelly 2006; Penninx & Roosblad 2000), but the extreme hardships experienced by migrants have rarely found sufficient solidarity and incorporation into the too often nationally inclined, well-established unions. Based on these indicators, the ILO regularly takes note of the widening gaps between foreign-born and native-born workers and the weaker conditions of the former group which are underscored by the provisions that violate international labour standards.

In particular, articles 2 and 3 of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) established the right of all workers to freely set up and join organizations "of their own choosing without previous authorization" and without any interference from public authorities, with the purpose of "furthering and defending" their own interests (art. 10). To date, 155 countries have ratified this convention, but among those who have not are Brazil, China, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United States of America. Similarly, another important piece of international law is the Right to Organise

and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) which, to date, has been ratified by 167 Member States. China, India, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, the UAE and the United States are among the countries that have not ratified Convention No. 98. This convention grants protection against anti-union practices such as working conditions that do not allow participation in unions and firing workers due to such participation. The same convention guarantees that employers do not interfere in workers' organizations and that all public service workers, other than those engaged in the administration of the state, should enjoy collective bargaining rights. The Committee on Freedom of Association of the ILO further decided that collective bargaining should be prioritized as the means to settle disputes arising in connection with the determination of terms and conditions of employment in public service.[4]

In addition to Convention Nos 87 and 98, another important ILO convention to consider for the purpose of this document is the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), which is in line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the ILO's explicit terms, the Member States who ratify this convention should eliminate any discrimination at work, which is understood as "any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation" (ILO 2003, 68). Disabilities or functional diversity, health conditions, age, education, skills, language, and family circumstances are also considered grounds for discrimination that should be eliminated. Implicit in the notion of "social origin", wealth, income, and class inequalities should also be targeted, especially when it comes to addressing pay gaps. In general, this principle intends to promote equal opportunities in labour aspects such as hiring, training, working conditions, remuneration, benefits, leaves, and access to credit, land and formal education (ILO 2003, 61).

A more comprehensive support to previous conventions was the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work that called for the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation in addition to the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. These statements and rights are, thus, considered of universal application to all ILO Member States regardless of their ratification of ILO conventions (ILO 2003, 73–75). The same fundamental principles and rights have been also echoed by the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (Goal 8 on Decent Work).

A comprehensive definition of workers' centres

Against this backdrop, there has been an emerging academic and political interest in alternative organizational structures and the struggles in responding to the needs of migrant workers and other workers in vulnerable situations including those in non-standard forms of employment.[5] We will focus on workers' centres (WCs) as spaces where mostly migrant and other precarious workers can gather, organize and strive for their rights, usually as alternatives to dominant labour unions (Choudry & Hlatshwayo 2016; Fine 2006; Milkman 2006). The notion and theoretical conceptualization of WCs was promoted in the US when these initiatives proliferated across the country following successful migrants' struggles such as the Justice for Janitors campaign in the early 1990s. However, similar practices can also be found elsewhere in different regions of the world. WCs have captured the attention of academics, union organizers, policymakers and the ILO because they "helped to fill an organizing void in sectors where non-standard forms of employment predominate"[6] and are largely used by first-, second- and third-generation migrant workers, but sometimes, also by marginalized internal migrants – in large countries such as India, China and Brazil – workers employed in the informal economy and other precarious

4 ILO, *Compilation of decisions of the Committee on Freedom of Association*, Sixth edition (2018), para.1241.

5 D.S. Cobble and L. Vosko, "Historical Perspectives on Representing Nonstandard Workers", *Nonstandard Work: The Nature and Challenges of Changing Employment Arrangements*, ed. Carré et al. 291–312 (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press), 2000.

6 H. Johnston and C. Land-Kazlauskas, *Organizing On-Demand: Representation, Voice, and Collective Bargaining in the Gig Economy*, Conditions of work and employment series No.94, ILO, Geneva, 2019.

groups of the native-born working class at large. Nonetheless, the designation of "workers' centre" is not used in all countries and situations, and if it is used, it is not necessarily with the same meaning. This is why we propose an expanded definition that would cover similar manifestations across the world.

Fine (2005, 1) provided one of the first standard definitions of WCs as "gateway organizations that provide information and training" for immigrant workers, often in association with other non-migrant low-wage and racialized workers. She also highlighted the WCs' role as "mediating institutions that are integrating low-wage workers into American civic life and facilitating collective deliberation, education, and action" (Fine 2005, 2). Importantly, Fine emphasized their engagement in grassroots organizing, rather than just service provision and advocacy. This means that regardless of the names given to various expressions of WCs, the author wanted to focus on the political side of their activity, as labour unions fighting for workers' rights and the improvement of their wages and working conditions although not necessarily named and registered as labour unions. An additional feature of WCs in the US was also identified in their establishment as "community-based and community-led organizations" (Fine 2005, 3). This expands the outreach and desired impact of WCs well beyond workplace-based controversies to deal with the local, spatialized inequalities affecting their constituencies in their daily life experiences. As a consequence, workers' organizing, as such, is often intertwined with other campaigns related to housing, public spaces, reproductive services (mostly education and healthcare), immigrant rights, policing and local politics.

If we observe WCs in action from the perspective of organizing migrant workers, we can see that their distinctive features boil down to their inclination to stretch the boundaries of traditional unionism towards various forms of mobilization and socio-political alliances that could tackle workers' rights as well as racial-ethnic discrimination, at least as seen from a long-term perspective. These two key areas, however, are often merged with other educational, recreational, cultural and political purposes. In the case of the US, Fine also observed that many WCs had the support of religious institutions and government agencies, unions and/or community organizations, but a more variegated picture may be drawn across the world.

In a more recent work, Fine et al. (2018, 21) found that most US-based WCs were associated with national federations.[7] This development was facilitated by funding from private and philanthropic foundations (Frantz & Fernandes 2018, 648–650). Fine and colleagues also argued that the usual trajectory of WCs was not leading them to form either unions or community organizations. Instead, they concluded that a "hybrid model" of a non-profit organization (NPO) was adopted because the funding and provision of services "subsidize the overall work, including organizing" (Fine et al. 2018, 32). In addition, WCs activists engaged in specific campaigns and policy change "rather than pressuring companies directly through strikes or consumer boycotts" (Fine et al. 2018, 34).

The emphasis on the hybridity of WCs follows previous debates focused on the struggles of women, black people and ethnic minorities while merging service provision and political protest from the 1960s to the 1980s (Minkoff 2002). Similarly, the global challenges faced by workers' organizations led them to propose "social-movement unionism" in order "to overcome the spatial separation of different racial groups within the working class" (Moody 2001, 173) and to mobilize the most disadvantaged workers in alliance with unions and other social movements (Moody 2001, 276; Fairbrother 2008). Despite the expansion of these hybrid alliances since the late 1990s – especially in Europe, Latin America, Asia and South Africa – they have not necessarily manifested in local WCs, or at least not on a regular basis. For example, women's trade unions in Japan and South Korea (Broadbent 2005, 2007) show how to improve the leverage of female labourers (without encompassing immigrant workers) facing gender discrimination while provisions of legal aid, advisory services and education are made without attachment to specific workplaces. In Japan, alternative

7 "The AFL-CIO has formed partnerships with WCs and other groups of working people who do not have the legal right to collective bargaining. Some, like taxi workers, have been misclassified as independent contractors. Others, including domestic workers and day laborers, have been excluded form coverage by US labor law."

community unions, however, have included migrants and day labourers equally (Urano & Stewart 2009, 131).

In fact, the notion of "community unionism" has been used with similar meanings as the term workers' centre. In their thorough discussion of several cases, Stewart et al. (2009) point at different dimensions of the concept while departing from a general definition: "Community unionism describes a whole series of ways that unions work with communities and community organizations over issues of interest to either or both" (Stewart et al. 2009, 2). The tension between service provision and organizing is one angle among other relevant ones, such as the geographical locations and scales of common interests and social relations, the intersectionality traits of the struggles against both labour exploitation and discrimination and the type of coalitions that are forged (Heery et al. 2012; Wills & Simms 2004). In a similar vein, Ryabchuk & Wilderman (2018) analysed the decline of "worker advice offices" in South Africa due to the absence of previous broad anti-apartheid coalitions. In this case, it was black workers, with limited citizen and labour rights, who originally became the constituents of the worker advice offices. In that sense their goals resembled those of WCs catering to immigrant workers (Ryabchuk & Wilderman 2018, 205). Nowadays, contemporary South African advice offices cater to casual and domestic workers, deliver advice on workers' rights and on non-workplace issues such as housing, and even encourage workers to join unions (Ryabchuk & Wilderman 2018, 211).

A consistent body of literature highlights the specific contexts in which WCs and experiences similar to them unfold – existing rights to form trade unions, institutionalization of collective bargaining, restrictions for migrants, domestic and local conditions of living, political regimes, etc. However, these contexts seem much better explored in the Global North (Bernhardt et al. 2009; Dadusc et al. 2019; Hanley & Shragge 2009; Martin et al. 2007; Roca 2020; Yu 2014). On the other hand, the complexities of fieldwork in conflict-affected regions of the Global South (such as Asia, Latin America, the Arab states) make non-academic sources (e.g. NGO reports) the best repository for tracking down the constellations of actors mobilizing (or at least attempting to) in contexts where bargaining power and organizing might be not only discouraged, but actually prohibited and obstructed, especially for highly precarious migrant workers (Bal & Gerard 2018; Bernardino-Costa 2014; Chan 2013; Piper 2006; Ford 2004; Hierofani 2016). The lack of a systematic comparison of those contexts in relation to the development of WCs represents a knowledge gap that needs to be addressed. The decontextualisation of WCs must be avoided to prevent restricted caracterisations of workers' centres from being generalized.

As these approaches show, any comprehensive definition of WCs should incorporate not only workers' struggles and practices beyond their workplaces, but also their broader political campaigns on facing discrimination based on ethnic, gender, class, social and political status, religion, disability and other grounds. The latter means that a broad, intersectional component of the WCs deserves a specific analysis in relation to the vulnerabilities they experience as workers. Although our main focus is on migrant workers, in our perspective, the scrutiny of the different practices and coalitions of actors is crucial in order to interrogate the experiences and struggles of the most precarious, poorest and worst-off workers involved in WCs. In addition, the spatial dimension of WCs beyond the workplace leads to interrogating the role of local communities, community organizations, territorially-based resources, services and reproductive activities. However, the centre, office or building hosting these alternative forms of unionizing may be either the departing point of struggles or their result or just a temporary spatial infrastructure. This boils down to the fact that the autonomy and self-management of WCs may be constrained or enabled by third-party organizations ranging from traditional trade unions to NGOs, religious organizations, private foundations, and international and state agencies. All these considerations suggest that WCs have to assess and tackle the geographic, productive, socioeconomic and political scales involved in the subject matters they address in order to achieve effectiveness, especially in a globalized world characterised by global supply chains (GSCs).

Further, WCs may tactically and strategically upgrade their actions from a local scale to regional, national and even transnational spheres in order to enhance the purview of their interventions. Besides, manifold actors playing on different scales and fields of action

may converge to achieve the same goal (e.g. obtaining decent wage regulations or halting repressive migratory schemes). The latter brings to the forefront the impact of the ILO, and similarly supranational actors, in supporting the bargaining, unionizing and leadership capacities of grassroots organizations without trumping their autonomy and rootedness in local contexts and communities.

Therefore, based on this expanded notion of WCs, the main research questions guiding this report are:

1. Why, how and where have WCs developed over time (2000–2020) across different world regions?
2. What are the impacts of WCs on the struggles for improving workers' rights?

More specifically:

a. How significant are the geographical contexts of WCs in terms of migration flows and policies, welfare regimes, labour markets and the nature of the industrial relations?

b. To what extent are gender and intersectional approaches incorporated in the knowledge production of WCs?

c. How do workers' organizations, NGOs and other formal institutions, including the ILO, interact with WCs or support them without eroding their value as autonomous safe spaces?

d. Which are the major advocacy and empowerment strategies developed by

Box 1. Workers' centres as advocacy organizations in the US

Imbalanced power dynamics are possibly one of the most pressing challenges that WCs, configured as socio-spatial constellations of actors, have to deal with when deciding how to combine advocacy and "social change power" (Jenkins 2002). In fact, the most qualified and well-equipped actors may undermine the importance of contextual conditions for allowing the expression of the agency of the grassroots and least resourceful members of the migrant community. Further, institutionalized actors may function as an obstacle to more substantive demands and changes, because they are mainly concerned with the persuasion and inclusion of elite institutions and powerful actors. Eventually, the neglect of this substantial inequality leads potential coalitions of actors into traditional, top-down advocacy patterns. This means that WC actors and their allies need to scrutinize the social conditions underpinning their organizing in order to be effective, representative of, and accountable to disenfranchised constituencies.

Jenkins (2002) addresses this matter based on the experience of US WCs organizing garment workers. The author draws some main lines of criticism towards the WCs' advocacy model, being: 1) their ineffectiveness in altering power imbalances between subaltern populations and governing institutions; 2) the advocacy work being led by professionals who are not part nor representative of the communities on behalf of whom they are speaking; 3) the emphasis upon the organization's members' subjectivity as opposed to practical and substantial changes of the oppressive labour contexts.

These dynamics are even reflected into the grassroots assemblages that attempt the non-profit organizing of low-income urban dwellers. Besides, Jenkins' critique of "the mobilization of elite institutions to achieve strategic goals" (Jenkins 2002, 61) resonates with the ILO's challenges in promoting organizing by strong grassroots actors and workers that may collide with the agendas of the institutional elites involved. As part of the proposed solutions to overcome these issues, Jenkins recommends that "the role of staff and advocacy techniques in general has to be constantly re-evaluated based on the changing needs of the membership" (Jenkins 2002, 88). In the authors' perspective, the social change capacity of a WC's members and the regular evaluation of their socioeconomic and political circumstances should be prioritized in order to outweigh the negative impact of the organization's growth and professionalization.

WCs in order to support migrant workers' rights and living conditions in contexts where the political and legal environment prevents trade unions from protecting workers' interests?

Each of the following sections provides an overview of the most updated information and our own interpretations regarding the specific research questions. Section 2 presents the key features of migration and labour regimes in different regions of the world with the aim of contextualizing the experiences of migrant workers' struggles. Section 3 focuses on the gender and intersectional dimensions and experiences of migrant workers. Section 4 discusses their capacities for self-organization in order to set up and recreate autonomous safe spaces. In Section 5, we identify "good practices" and strategies and explore specific WC case studies in different geographical areas based on our comprehensive definition. The section also discusses the ILO's role in furthering WCs' endeavours. Finally, a summary of our findings is presented in the concluding pages (Section 6).

2. Socio-spatial contextualization: Migration and labour regimes

In the last four decades, labour markets have been significantly deregulated by increasingly weakened welfare regimes (Rodgers 2007). In middle- and high-income countries especially, the following processes can be distinguished: a wide spread of non-standard forms of employment, rising wage inequalities, the segmentation of labour markets (driven by factors such as gender, migration and information technologies), the individualization of labour contracts, poorer insurance coverage from public pension funds, a generalized increase in the retirement age, the shrinkage of the manufacturing sector, and the growth of both high productivity and low-level service sectors. Among the new forms of casual jobs, staff leasing managed by temporary work agencies has been regulated in all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries since the 1990s. This has triggered abundant criticism due to the lack of protection of temporary workers and the trap of their permanent condition as temporary, casual and unsafe. Remarkably, migrant workers occupy the worst tiers of the widening job segmentation.

Different trends were observed in many Asian, African and Latin American countries. Their recent industrial growth has diminished the share of the workforce employed in agricultural activities, with massive moves of the population to urban areas and, in particular, to work in the growing manufacturing and extractive sectors and the informal economy. These changes have deeply modified the international division of labour with implications for the oversimplified distinctions between developed and developing countries. Hence, many strategic places in the contemporary global economy are neither Western nor urban. Off-shored industrial activities and stretched lines of production in GSCs (Gereffi & Fernandez-Stark 2011; Mezzadri 2017) have created terminals in low-wage Asian countries, especially in regions earmarked to attract foreign direct investment. These special economic zones are high-intensity manufacturing areas, where huge inflows of migrant populations from the hinterland or nearby states are employed. Unlawful conditions of employment and the unlikely recognition of the rights to unionize are often in place. Beyond these hubs and interfaces of the global economy, other world regions keep track of their mainly export-oriented raw materials economies, especially in Latin America, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and some regions of the African continent.

In all these so-called "developed" and "developing" economies some common traits may be identified:

- A growing divide shapes labour markets. In both high-income and low-income countries, this separation – which has been designated as segmentation but also "dualization" (Emmenegger et al. 2012) – sets apart a protected and unionized labour force on the one hand from the unprotected sector of flexible workers, including those in the informal or grey economy, on the other.
- It is in the least protected sectors of the economy that the greater flows of migrant workers arrive and usually remain forever. These migrant workers are segregated from the most protected sectors according to various patterns of social reproduction (Harris 1995). These labour migration flows mainly occur within world regions, but it is also worth noting that border controls manage them in more heavy-handed ways according to economic cycles (Castles et al. 2013).
- Growing parts of the global labour force in general, and of the migrant labour force in particular, are female (even if notable exceptions can be found in the Indian subcontinent), both in advanced and emerging economies. On the one hand, there is a growing participation of women in professions from which they were excluded before. Migrant women became wage labourers in higher proportions than native-born women. On the other hand, despite all the international regulations,

women still face manifold discriminations in the workplace in addition to a double burden of workloads as both waged labourers in the public sphere and unwaged labourers in the private domain (Federici 2012).

Against this backdrop, union density, meaning the share of workers joining a union in their workplace, is continuously declining (Heery & Salmon 2000). This phenomenon has different causes hinging on various segments of the labour market and on industrial and geographical contexts. High-skilled workers are supposed to bargain individually due to their greater power of negotiation. However, all other workers, especially those in the global value chain (GVC) and dependent on various subcontracting firms located in the Global South, are weakened by a great mobility of the investments and by anti-labour legislation. In this situation, there have been multiple responses (Healey et al. 2004). Official unions have frequently been criticized for maintaining their bargaining power by holding on to their stable, dependent labour force. Even if the social relevance of this base of affiliates still gives workers an opportunity to find a settlement with labour market institutions or employers, changes in the labour market are inevitably shrinking its largeness. Another way is to go back to the roots of the labour movement by recovering an organizing approach, usually leading to more confrontational actions. However, most of the workers in non-unionized activities are women or members of ethnic minorities, whose needs are hardly met by the discourses and strategies of the dominant trade unions. This explains the rise of WCs and community unions who aim at engaging other pro-labour actors from civil society and local territories (Choudry & Hlatshwayo 2015; Martinez & Perret 2009; Tattersal 2008; Wills & Simms 2004).

The notion of WCs holds different meanings in the Global North and the Global South. In the latter, for example, there are "labour NGOs" and other civil society organizations (CSOs) that resemble WCs. In the OECD countries, however, WCs usually refer to organizational structures that reach out to day wage labourers, migrant workers and subcontracted workers and engage in labour advocacy and provision of services (Fine 2006; Roca 2019).

In the following sections, we provide accounts of all these variations of WCs and deepen our analysis by understanding how these alternative organizational structures unfold in different world regions such as Asia and the Middle East, the OECD countries, Latin America and Africa. This subdivision is neither purely geographical nor purely socioeconomic (for instance, some Asian and Latin American countries are members of the OECD), but it pragmatically serves the purpose of identifying different expressions of WCs in relation to labour and migration regimes that, in turn, can also vary within every world region.

As a consequence, we argue that this geographical division and comparison sheds light on two strategic levels of analysis:

- The spatial dimension of the encounters among workers leads to the creation of WCs. In Asian countries, it is common for corporations to concentrate the living spaces of workers in dormitories or dwellings near their factories. This kind of concentration, intended for control, turns out to be a triggering condition that facilitates contact among workers and activists, resulting in forms of alternative unionism, sometimes in the form of WCs. Likewise, the places where day labourers meet for solicitation of work are prone to favour the setup of WCs there or nearby. The same rationale applies when migrants work and live in the same neighbourhood or urban district. This spatial proximity facilitates the rise of WCs as grassroots spaces for labour organizing besides other social and reproductive needs (housing, education, health, regularization of citizenship status, etc.). The local space for labourers is where WCs usually originate. But, as we will see, their political reach tends to be national in OECD countries and more international in other world regions when (often Western) NGOs are involved too.
- The gender and intersectional features of the labour force are crucial to understand the composition and leverage of WCs. Sectors where WCs operate are significantly gendered, with a higher or lower prevalence of women. A similar distinction applies to the ethnic or citizenship status of workers. The

relevance of different economic activities (industrial production, service provision, extractive and agricultural sectors, construction, etc.) is highly affected by its gender and intersectional workforce, which varies across the world despite the existence of some global patterns. As we will see, WCs that focus on women workers, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association in India (SEWA) and Working Women Centres in Australia, represent strongholds for crucial feminist resistance, self-organization and mutual support in which organizing spaces become key instruments for articulating demands.

2.1 The Arab states, the Middle East and Asia

The Arab states and the Middle East

The labour migration patterns in the Gulf region are characterized primarily by interregional migration. In 2018, the ILO estimated that the largest share of migrant workers in proportion to the labour force was in the Arab states at 41 per cent (ILO 2018, 14). In the GCC countries, the high proportions of migrants in relation to the national populations have changed the demography of these countries. For instance, IOM estimated that in 2019, migrants comprised 88 per cent of the total population in the UAE, 79 per cent in Qatar and 72 per cent in Kuwait (IOM 2019, 70). The economic growth fuelled by the oil boom since the 1970s has led large numbers of skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers to the GCC countries. In addition to socioeconomic incentives, such as the income differentials between migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries, historical, cultural and institutional proximities are key drivers of migration to the GCC countries (Rajan & Oommen 2019; Valenta & Jakobsen 2016). Migrant workers in these countries are primarily from South Asia and Southeast Asia – a shifting trend which Rajan and Oommen (2019) called the "Asianisation" of migrant labour in the Gulf – as well as North and East Africa (IOM 2019). While male workers are employed in construction and retail, women workers are predominantly employed in the domestic sector.

In this regard, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue was established in 2008 as a state-led regional dialogue and cooperation forum to improve the governance of labour migration between Asian countries of labour origin and destination, including six Gulf countries of destination. The Dialogue consists of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Malaysia. The process is voluntary and non-binding, with observers including IOM, the ILO, private sector players and civil society representatives such as the Migrant Forum in Asia.

Remarkably, the kafala (sponsorship) system, which is practiced in the GCC countries to manage labour migration, has been criticized for contributing to the vulnerabilities of migrant workers, leading them to conditions similar to forced labour and slavery (Esim & Smith 2004; Atong et al. 2018; Walk Free Foundation 2018; Tamkeen 2015). The kafala system restricts family reunification, especially for unskilled migrants, and ties migrant workers to their employers. The system formalizes the control of employers over workers, including the power to change employment contracts, repatriate workers without prior notice, and ban workers from entering the country again (Rahman 2015; Tamkeen 2015). Despite increasing calls and plans to change the kafala system, progress is still slow, and it does not apply to domestic workers (Varia 2011).

The unionizing and organizing of workers, especially migrant workers, is restricted in the Middle East. Most trade unions in the Middle East are unitary and integrated into the state structure or the ruling parties, with the exception of unions in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey (Bayat 2002, 5). Because the activities of local NGOs are discouraged by the state in the Middle East, international NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and international organizations, such as the ILO and IOM, play an important role in monitoring labour migration trends and protecting migrant workers' rights. Reports by international organizations, trade unions and NGOs (Atong et al. 2018; Esim & Smith 2004; HRW 2012, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; ITUC Global Rights Index 2020; IOM 2015) become important sources of information about the labour and migration systems in the region and about the vulnerabilities of migrant workers across sectors, from construction workers to domestic workers. Some embassies in the region, among

them the Embassy of the Philippines in Bahrain, Kuwait and Lebanon, and the Indonesian Embassy in the UAE, have set up shelters to help their citizens in distress (Esim & Smith 2004). Government-run shelters for migrant workers are also found in Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, but human rights activists have been critical of these shelters for being overcrowded and understaffed (Lageman 2014), which dissolves any resemblance to autonomous and empowering WCs.

Migrant workers who are involved in organizing may face prosecution. In 2014, the Lebanese government, for instance, denied the request of migrant domestic workers to form a union, denounced the union as illegal, and arrested and deported the organizers two years later despite their legal labour migration status (HRW 2016). In her study, Pande (2012) found that illegal migrant workers in Lebanon organized collectives in rented apartments where they could gather, discuss problems and get assistance. The organizing of these collectives is, thus, similar to a WC. In addition to functioning as temporary refuges for runaways, these collectives have membership, meetings, election of leaders, and they advise workers on conflict resolution and on freelance work. Despite their vulnerabilities, these illegal migrant workers enjoy more freedom of association than those who are legal but live in their employers' homes (Pande 2012, 397). For live-in, migrant domestic workers whose mobility is more restricted, "balcony talks", along with activism in faith-based communities, become important forms of "meso-level resistance" and mutual support (Mansour-Ille & Hendow 2018; Pande 2012).

Further work on the organizing of migrant workers in the Arab states is still required. Restrictions on unionism and activism in the region mean that networking and support from organizations and other actors outside the region, including those in the origin countries of migrants, are crucial for the organizing of workers. For example, in the conclusions of a report about the condition of African workers in the GCC countries, the International Trade Union Confederation-Africa (ITUC-Africa) suggested that institutions similar to WCs should be established to promote fair recruitment practices, leverage advocacy, media campaigns and the integration of returning migrants (Atong et al. 2018, 65–67). Meanwhile, work by migrant workers' organizations in origin countries, such as the Philippines-based Migrante International, which has opened a regional base in the Middle East, focuses on citizenship as a key identity to provide support to their fellow citizens, and to demand the government protect their citizens (Gamburd 2009; Rodriguez 2011). Support for local unions from international organizations with a strong union base, such as that given by the Solidarity Center, which is affiliated to the US-based American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), to unions in Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia, is also beneficial to strengthen the freedom of association in those countries.

East, South and Southeast Asia

The rest of the Asian region, meanwhile, is characterized by inter- and intra-regional labour migration patterns. Outmigration from the region is mostly to North America and Europe, while Europeans – and Africans, recently growing in number – comprise the largest groups of immigrants from outside the region (IOM 2019, 68). Intraregional migration within Asia, meanwhile, as estimated by IOM, has increased significantly since the 1990s (ibid.). Rapid industrialization in the region has triggered intraregional migration. Just as the migration regimes in the region vary greatly, the organizing of migrant workers in the region also varies. It depends on industrial relations, the availability of political space and the attitudes of local unions towards migrant workers (Ford 2019).

As part of Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa (the BRICS countries), China and India aim to be the world's suppliers of manufactured goods with their wholesale and export-oriented strategies. The establishment of export processing zones (EPZs) in China, such as the most densely concentrated Pearl River Delta in the Guangdong province, attracts not only foreign direct investments but also migrant workers with rural hukou registration.

Rural-urban migrant workers in China are more mobile than urban workers and, thus, have different needs (Kumar & Li 2007). Rather than be embedded in the workplace, self-organized unions for migrant workers are located in the local labour market to facilitate the high mobility of migrant workers. WCs are viewed as less threatening by local authorities. The Shenzhen Workers Occupational Safety and Health

Centre and the Guangdong Panyu Document Management Service Centre for Migrant Workers, for instance, were established as labour insurance businesses to represent clients in legal settlements for work-related injuries after the Shenzhen Municipal Administration's refusal to register centres (Cheng et al. 2010).

The rules governing NPOs are rather restrictive in China too, with requests for a minimum of 50 individuals or 30 group members, employing full-time staff members and guaranteeing a working fund between 30,000-100,000 Chinese yuan. Self-organized groups are, therefore, seldom registered, which also means that they are more vulnerable to repression by the state. Sometimes, these groups may receive support from abroad. This is the case, for instance, with the labour movement by migrant workers in the Pearl River Delta because of its geographical proximity to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (Chan 2012). In particular, Chan (2012) identified two methods of labour migrant organizing: enterprise intervention and community intervention. Mobilizing strategies under community intervention methods can be categorized into legal mobilizing and cultural mobilizing (Xu 2013), which can vary from workers' services centres, outreach and social surveys to policy advocacy (Chan 2012). With limited political opportunities, civil society in China is strongly vulnerable to state control in the form of surveillance, repression and co-option (Xu 2013).

Unlike mainland China, Hong Kong is an exception when it comes to migrant-led labour migration movements because of the permissive stance of the government towards activism and protests post 1997 in postcolonial Hong Kong. A faith-based initiative, Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW), founded in 1981 was the initial formal support program focusing on migrant labour in Hong Kong (Ford 2019). They provide various forms of support to migrant workers, such as shelter, training and education, and advocacy. MFMW's shelter Bethune House became a space of refuge for migrant workers and a place for workers to build a collective with fellow migrant workers (Hsia 2009). For instance, half the founders of the migrant-led Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong (ATKI-HK) were former clients of Bethune House.

Hong Kong is the only country in Asia that recognizes domestic workers as such, and thus includes them in their labour law, and allows migrant workers to organize and register as a union (Ford 2019). Ally (2005, 203) categorized the organizing of migrant domestic workers into two models: (1) the association model, which mobilizes the workers based on the inscription of global migration *as lived experience of exploitation*; and (2) the union model, which mobilizes the domestic workers based on their status *as workers*.

In Hong Kong, these two models exist and the difference between an association and a union lies in the stipulation about dealing with the Labour Department. Associations cannot provide legal support and welfare provisions, while unions are able to represent labour cases (APMM 2016). The Indonesian Migrant Workers' Union, the Filipino Migrant Workers' Union and the Overseas Nepalese Workers Union are a few examples of migrant worker unions in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, migrant unions in Hong Kong share more characteristics with WCs as hybrid unions rather than with traditional trade unions. They are established and led by migrants – based on nationality and industry – and they face challenges in securing funding, which relies on membership fees, organizing members and gaining strong collective bargaining power (APMM 2016). The organizing of migrant workers is not limited to work-related issues. Migrant workers in Hong Kong engage in public actions on diverse social, economic and political issues, such as organizing the Migrants' Pride March to raise awareness on the discrimination experienced by LGBTIQ+ migrant workers and joining the anti-World Trade Organization protest (Constable 2009; Lai 2018).

Japan, meanwhile, is reluctant to admit unskilled immigrant workers, and the admission of temporary migrant workers happens through "side doors", such as co-ethnic and trainee schemes (Yamanaka 2010). Critiques have been raised of these "side doors" schemes, such as the Economic Partnership Agreements, which allow the recruitment of migrant nurses and certified care workers, and the Technical Intern Training Program, which allows foreign trainees to work in various sectors up to five years, for acquiring cheap labour and producing "ideal migrant workers" (Lan 2018; Yoshida 2020). With the reluctance of the state to recognize foreign workers, there are limited options for the workers to seek assistance. Enterprise unions in Japan organize only full-time workers – thus

often excluding migrant workers employed on an irregular and temporary basis – and their agenda often conflates with the interests of the companies' management (Urano & Stewart 2007, 106). Therefore, the organizing of migrant workers takes place through individual-based or community-based unions. Individual-based unions, such as the All-Japan Metal and Information Machinery Workers' Union, come up as an effort to organize ethnic minority workers, such as Japanese-Brazilian, often found in small and medium enterprises across industries (Ueki 2016). Similarly, community unions organize workers from small and micro firms, part-time workers, agency temporary workers, foreign workers, and women workers (Urano & Stewart 2007, Weathers 2010). Community unions share similar hybrid characteristics with WCs: informal, small membership, small numbers of professional staff, low-budget and operating in a local area (Weathers 2010; Yamanaka 2010).

The garment industry for export has emerged significantly in South Asia, specifically in India and Bangladesh. The emergence of textile and garment industrial clusters in various parts of India is rooted in local historical trajectories and thus creates unique product differences between these centres, from embroidery and embellished products, which capitalize on local craft legacies, to mass textile production, which benefits from the geographical proximity to cotton plantations (Mezzadri 2017; ILO 2017). These clusters have mostly attracted workers from nearby villages as well as from other parts of the country. Extensive academic and non-academic studies have documented various issues including the poor working conditions in these clusters (Mezzadri 2017; Uchikawa 2014; Fair Wear Foundation n.d.; FIDH 2014; ILO 2017); the criticisms against the Sumangali scheme, commonly found in the South Indian textile industry, which legalizes the employment of young women as cheap labour (Solidaridad-South & South East Asia 2012; ILO 2017); the labour relations in the global commodity chain (Mezzadri & Fan 2018; Mezzadri 2014); and the lives of garment factory workers after they stop working as factory workers (Mezzadri & Majumder 2018).

The organizing of garment workers in India takes diverse forms. Since shop-floor organizing is very difficult in practical terms given the contractual nature of the workforce and that industrial relations are difficult, some NGOs support self-help groups to organize workers on women's rights issues (e.g. sexual harassement) and other community issues, such as Cividep's Munnade initiative for garment workers (Jenkins 2013) or Social Awareness and Voluntary Education's initiative of self-help groups for homeworkers (HWW 2013, 2015). Munnade was a unique example of a "pre-union" (Jenkins 2013) because it eventually led to the establishment of the Garment and Textile Workers Union (GATWU). The establishment of various unions for garment workers, such as GATWU, Garment and Fashion Workers Union (GAFWU), and Garment and Allied Workers Union (GAWU), as well as SEWA for home-based workers, marks the success of organizing workers in these sectors despite the challenges they face (Mani 2011; Gross 2013; Jenkins 2013; Sinha 2013).

Intra-ASEAN migration is strongly marked by the concentration of 96 per cent of migrants in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand (Gerard & Bal 2020). Gerard and Bal (2020) referred to the governance of labour migration in Southeast Asia as a "bifurcated" system. The governance of low-wage migration revolves around the deployment of labour, rather than the protection of rights, while high-wage migration allows the receiving state to cherry pick professionals to boost the economic development of the state. The commitment of ASEAN states to develop the ASEAN Instrument on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, meanwhile, has been stalled for more than a decade (Bal & Gerard 2018).

Various initiatives to promote the rights of workers abroad and to organize workers flourish in the Philippines and Indonesia as the two major migrant origin countries in the region. In these two countries, NGOs spearhead the advocacy of migrant workers at the national and international levels, while the engagement of local unions on international labour migration issues is rather weak (Ford 2019, 2006). The establishment of the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia/SBMI) was unique since it is recognized as a labour union, but its members consist of returned migrant workers, prospective migrant workers and their families, rather than the workers themselves (Ford 2006). Community-based networks of migrant workers also exist in Indonesia, such as the Indonesian Migrant Worker Solidarity (Solidaritas BMI) and the Centre for Women's Development (Pusat Pengembangan Sumberdaya Wanita), and they are usually affiliated to NGOs. Yet, like

the members of SBMI, the members of these networks and advocacy groups are prospective or returned migrant workers and their families rather than the workers themselves (Ford 2006; Raharto & Noveria 2012). The Center for Overseas Workers and Scalabrini Migration Center are examples of NGOs in the Philippines that focus on migrant labour. Migrante International, which was originally linked to the political left, has also emerged as a significant actor to provide services and advocacy to Filipino migrants abroad (Ford 2019).

Labour migrant organizations in migrant origin countries play an important role in disseminating information about international labour migration and the rights of migrant workers as well as in integrating returned migrant workers back into society. They usually also provide assistance and counselling for work-related problems, but their capacity is limited as the workers are employed outside state boundaries (Ford 2006). In this case, alliances with organizations in destination countries and transnational networks help create a strong leverage to advance their rights advocacy. A few organizations have even established representatives in select migrant destination countries, such as Migrante International (from the Philippines), with more than 200 member organizations in 23 countries, and Migrant Care (from Indonesia) with a branch in Malaysia.

The political space in Singapore and Malaysia is also heavily restricted. Nevertheless, despite the repression of unions by the state, there is vibrant civil society activism in Malaysia in support of migrant workers. NGOs such as Tenaganita, Women's Aid Organization and SUARAM provide shelters, legal support, education and empowerment programs and advocacy on the rights of migrant workers (Gurowitz 2000; Piper 2006). A change in attitude by the Malaysian Trade Union towards migrant workers since the early 2000s has also resulted in a more inclusive approach (Piper 2006). The Malaysian Trade Union has tried to register the establishment of a domestic workers' union twice; however, the attempts were rejected both times (Hierofani 2016). These organizations are located mostly in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, and there is no strong presence of migrant labour organizations in eastern Malaysia despite a high number of migrant workers in Sabah (Ford 2019). In Sabah, for instance, migrant workers are estimated to comprise 80–90 per cent of the timber workers (Network of the Oppressed People 2017, 232). The individual-based Timber Employees Union, however, has started to pay attention to workers from Nepal, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Vietnam in Sabah and Sarawak since 2005 (ibid.). This suggests that uneven support for migrant workers is available across the country.

The Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics and Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) are the two main NGOs in Singapore addressing the rights of migrant workers, through provisions of hotlines and helpdesks. Due to its ties to the Singaporean women's movement, TWC2 originally focused mainly on migrant domestic workers but it has expanded its focus to include other temporary migrant workers (Ford 2019; Lyons 2009). The Singapore National Trade Union Congress, meanwhile, has been successful in improving housing and occupational safety for migrant workers in the construction sector, but has lacked programs for migrant domestic workers (Piper 2006). The recent COVID-19 crisis has shown that the dwellings of migrant workers were the main and almost exclusive spaces for the spread of the infection in Singapore, denoting the poor standards of their living spaces and their social marginalization at large.

In general, transnationalism has been a useful strategy in the labour migration movements in South and Southeast Asia as a result of global industrial relations. Transnationalism for migrant workers could manifest in the form of collaborations between local associations or unions with international organizations. In India, for instance, unions like GATWU and GAFWU have cooperated with international groups, such as Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) or Worker Rights Consortium, to create international leverage as part of their organizing strategies (Gross 2013; Jenkins 2013). Through collaboration with international groups, local unions have been able pressure global brands to demand that local suppliers improve the workers' situation.

Transnational networks or alliances which are comprised of associations, unions or NGOs are other forms of transnationalism. Migrant worker associations, unions and NGOs from 17 countries in Asia, for instance, formed the Migrant Forum in Asia, whose agenda includes education and work organizing for migrants. Grassroots migrant organizations in Hong Kong, including migrant-led associations, formed a

coalition called the Asian Migrants' Coordinating Body. Representatives of this coalition were later involved in the formation of the International Migrant Alliance, which is the first global alliance of grassroots migrant organizations (Hsia 2009).

The sectors where migrant workers are employed – such as manufacturing – are at the bottom of the GVCs. Similarly, domestic and care work performed by migrants is part of the global care chain. And so, by framing the vulnerabilities of migrant workers as part of the GVCs and forming transnational collaborations or alliances, local workers' centres, associations or unions could have greater leverage. Transnationalism as a strategy, however, could have a few possible outcomes. On a few occasions when local unions for garment workers in India collaborated with international pressure groups, the buyer decided to cut the contract with the supplier, which led to factory closure and the loss of jobs for the workers. This, however, also resulted in stronger bargaining power for the local unions among local factories (Gross 2013). Local unions in authoritarian countries such as Malaysia, meanwhile, risk accusations of being "pawns or lap dogs of the West" due to their affiliation with transnational networks (Gurowitz 2000).

2.2 OECD countries

The last five years, since 2015, have represented a turning point for OECD countries, comparable to the one that took place 40 years ago, as a worldwide economic recession corresponds to restrictive migration policies (Castles et al. 2013). Western countries inside the OECD have been representing themselves as hosting societies by virtue of their recognition of the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees and their post-colonial responsibility. Nevertheless, after the 2008 global financial crisis, an extremely restrictive turn in the field of migration policies has prevailed. In general, the rhetorical underpinnings of these policies are built upon a populist narrative that sets unemployed native-born workers against migrants, who are depicted as welfare freeloaders and culprits behind the scarcity of available jobs. If, in the US, this rhetoric clashed with a positive economic growth that decreased unemployment to its lowest post-war rate, in South Europe and European inner areas, the increase in migrant populations matched steady trends of soaring impoverishment and inequalities. Among the new working poor, youth, migrants and women overwhelm a labour segment historically under-represented in traditional unions as they are considered to be "unorganizable". However, in the aftermath of the economic crisis, they have become an outstanding trigger for innovative forms of labour activism and union organizing (Wheeler 2002).

In the same way as noted for the Asian region, urbanity represents an important feature in the way WCs emerge as they operate as a part of a larger movement integrated by disenfranchized communities and minorities. The urban areas that concentrate a greater presence of WCs, as originally conceptualized (Fine 2005b, 2006), can be traced to the US, and specifically in three regions: the Mid-East and North-East (especially New York City, among Chinese communities) (Milkman & Ott 2014); the Western metropolitan areas (among Asian communities) (Milkman et al. 2010); and Florida, where the number of WCs has been growing since the early 2000s (Nissen 2004). The literature highlights that the proliferation of different geographical areas corresponds to different generations of WCs. The first WCs were born in the South at the beginning of the 1980s, almost at the same time as the foundation of the first community unions. The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), founded in Arkansas during the mid-1970s, used to be the most popular one (Atlas 2010).

The US-based WCs stemmed from the industrialization of the southern states (Carolina and the Mexican border in Texas) and the change in manufacturing activities there. As the industrial boom marked growing wage gaps between white and black working classes, members of the civil rights movements invested in organizing the demands of underpaid, marginalized black workers. These leaders had strong connections with traditional unions and yet were critical of their forms of organizing that ended up under-representing the migrant and ethnic minority segments of the labour force. As a response, WCs were founded by activists who usually had a political background; for instance, in El Paso, a WC was established after a strike of Latino migrant women in a textile factory and was mobilized by organizers previously active in international solidarity campaigns with Central American countries.

A second wave of WCs grew during the 1990s to represent new migrants arriving from Central

America and South-East Asian countries (Fine 2005). Although their organizational model replicated that of the first wave, their social composition was different, since members of the new WCs had less political commitment and more connections with NGOs. A third wave of WCs followed in the early 2000s, and involved new suburban areas as WCs responded to the needs of representation and grassroots organizing for recently arrived migrants (Gordon 2005; Roca 2019). Lastly, in recent years, a proliferation of WCs has born closer to the federal borders in support of the migrants' attempts to cross over. Other WCs were initiated on the western coast, where new logistic functions have been located to support the San Francisco harbour activities. In particular, in San Bernardino, an area populated by many undocumented and low-skilled Latinos, warehouses managed by subcontracted firms operate on behalf of the big retail corporations (i.e. Amazon, Walmart). Wages are under the living threshold, and workers are under extreme pressure because employment is highly cyclical, and they are subject to seasonal unemployment. It is important to stress that these short-term forms of employment significantly affect the unionizing modalities, whereby the period required to set up traditional unions' campaigns of recruitment are usually longer than the actual duration of seasonal contracts. Against this backdrop, the Change to Win coalition in 2010 chose to open a WC (the Warehouse Worker Resource Center) and to immediately start filing legal complaints against Walmart as the general contractor of the warehouses where the WC's members were employed. This strategy proved to be successful as this helped the centre bring their action directly to the attention of the State of California (Reese & Struna 2018).

To summarize, three main common traits of the WC waves in the US can be identified (Fine 2011):

1. Being place-based rather than workplace-based: The WCs' engagement with workers does not occur in the workplace, but rather in the local districts and neighbourhoods where the workers live.
2. Strong ethnic connotation: Ethnicity represents the major driver in WCs' recruitment patterns instead of occupational status, industry or profession. Indeed, the same ethnic background favours a snowball effect in participation that does not prevent inter-ethnic alliances yet. For instance, in the case of the Chinese Staff Worker Association (the largest WC in New York City), the Chinese workers employed in the construction industry orchestrated a campaign in alliance with black workers against the discriminatory practices of recruitment used by a foundation owned by the Chinese community (Tait 2016).
3. Community-oriented actions: WCs deploy actions whose purview extends beyond the workplace and aim at empowering disenfranchised communities and minorities following the predicaments of Paulo Freire's "popular education" of the oppressed (Zanoni 2019).

These features helped WCs to reach out to workers who are usually deemed as unorganizable, such as day labourers, who are mostly undocumented Latino migrants (Chauvin 2015), working as "jack of all trades" on behalf of temporary work agencies (they might be regular or not), or directly as self-employed. Their presence is, in fact, quite visible, yet usually addressed in terms of policing devices, as happened in Redondo Beach (California), where the municipality extended the anti-solicitation legislation to criminalize the gathering of migrants waiting to be hired in the streets (Narro 2006). As a response, the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON), founded in 2001 as a national coalition and advocacy group for day labourers, organized a big rally against the prosecution of undocumented workers looking for jobs. While this is an example of a legal campaign turning into an attempt at social unionism, many WCs also operate on the sidelines to train migrants about their rights as workers who are entitled to demand transparency and fairness in the daily process of hiring as well as safe conditions and a floor payment under which any worker can refuse to be hired. These specific WC activities reveal the importance of WCs for both the ability to intervene inside informal sectors and to reach out to undocumented workers, who are difficult to contact and organize as they are in constant jeopardy of deportation (Theodore et al. 2009).

In order to minimize these risks, WCs move their meetings and activities to street corners while providing counselling on public benches. Given the nature of these activities, the exact impact in terms of improving these dispersed conditions of precarity is difficult to gauge, and therefore,

it has often been questioned, although official statistics have detected an increase in the wages of day labourers in the metropolitan areas where WCs operate (Visser et al. 2017). On the other hand, there is wide recognition of the WCs' capability to simultaneously accomplish different missions that expand beyond traditional union activities such as service provisions, advocacy and labour organization. This is also made possible by the fact that WCs operate in the grey areas outside the duties foreseen for unions by the National Labor Relations Act, 1935 (Gottheil 2014). This means that WCs have room to launch boycott campaigns while acting as a recognized bargaining actor by local governments at the same time (Fine & Gordon 2010; Gleeson 2013).

For an understanding of the European context, we need to extend the notion of WCs beyond the US-based definition as we attempt to grasp comparable activities taking place in different labour and migration regimes. It is worth noting that in most European countries, collective bargaining is generally handled by the central government, which politically weighs unions as fundamental negotiating parties. If, in principle, this should imply a greater possibility for intervening in the issues of labour market segregation and the discrimination against minorities, it yet uncovers that gap. The degree of under-representation varies across different countries according to the structure of the labour market and the prevailing unions (Marino et al 2017). For instance, experiences of coalitions in the UK (Martinez & Perret 2009; Holgate 2015) brought up ambivalent results. The most prominent example is the collaboration between the community organization TELCO and the Trade Union in East London (Wills 2004) for the Living Wage Campaign. The campaign had a certain degree of success, but it vanished due to a communication gap between the union and the community organizers.

Community-oriented coalitions did not take off in the UK, and there was an unmet need of protection for isolated, precarious and migrant workers. However, two advocacy associations (Citizens Advice bureaus and Law Service adviser) tried to fill the lack of voice that characterizes the British labour market, proven by the fact that only 23.4 percent of the workers are union members (Visser 2019). On the other hand, these "legal clinics" do not represent hubs for collective organizing and unionizing – they act mostly through individual workers' lawsuits against employers. In a study about the practice of these WCs (Pollert 2008), it was found that the access to legal advice services was directly proportional to the degree of the vulnerability of the worker, and the demand overwhelmed the centres' capacity to respond only through volunteers.

Among European countries, it is worth pointing to the distinctive features of Southern Europe. After the 1990s, the issue of ethnic diversity was mostly framed in a debate about the civic integration of new citizens rather than in terms of labour segregation. In the case of Italy, trade unions have been considered fundamental actors in this process of integration despite the pervasiveness of the Catholic Church's infrastructures (Marino 2012). Yet, the huge inflow of migrants from 2015 onwards and the xenophobic turn that followed have radically altered this framework as well as the demands of trade unions (Pradella Cillo 2015). On the one hand, institutionalized trade unions have stopped demanding the abolition of the repressive Bossi-Fini migration law in order to not alienate the consensus of their native Italian constituency. On the other hand, in the same way as in Spain (Santamarina & Cabezas 2019), anti-austerity and grassroots social movements have embedded anti-discrimination and migration issues in their political agendas (Zamponi 2017).

In Italy, because of the professional segregation of women and young people in low-paid jobs, social movements have historically been involved in anti-precarity issues and have contributed to organizing major events highlighting the precarious conditions of young workers (the so-called May Day parade). This work of propaganda has only recently and sporadically turned into a proper work of legal advocacy mixed with organizing pro-labour activism. An example is Camera del lavoro autonomo e precario (CLAP), a sort of WC born inside a former occupied social centre (Montagna 2016) in Rome which mainly addresses migrant workers employed in highly precarious and informal sectors such as tourism, restaurants and domestic work. Further, it is worth noticing that alternative and independent organizational structures regularly spread in the new jobs created by the so-called 'gig economy', i.e. deliveries and food riders, where the majority of workers are working students and low-skilled migrants (Tassinari & Maccarone 2017).

Box 2. A day without us (US and Mexico)

In 2017, the large Mexican community in the US began a new national strike in opposition to President Donald Trump's hostile migration policies, and in particular against the deliberations to build a wall on the Mexico-US border and dismantle the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, which allows the regularization of the 'Dreamers', who are children born on American soil from undocumented parents. In March 2020, the protest was replicated once again by Mexican women, who protested against femicide and gendered violence in Mexico. This protest was run by feminist groups and activists, who have kept meeting and organizing since 2017 (Peréz Sanchez 2020).

In 2004, the Mexican film-maker Sergio Arau first released the movie *A Day Without a Mexican,* a piercing satire about what would happen if the entire Mexican population disappeared from California. The movie was meant to show the disruption that would be caused by the absence of Mexican workers and dwellers to the local economy and social reproductive sectors, as well as the centrality of the economic sectors in which they are employed and investing. The arguments raised by the movie became slogans for the day of strike known as the Great American Boycott. On 1 May 2006, over a million mostly Latino/a, but also Middle Eastern, Asian and Eastern European migrants struck work and rallied all across the US while withdrawing from schooling, businesses and jobs. As they took to the streets of major US cities, they protested against the 2005 Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act and demanded equality and amnesty for undocumented migrants (Heisnaken 2009). The campaign was endorsed by different groups ranging from Catholic organizations to local chapters of Chicano groups like Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanx de Aztlán (MEChA). The boycott was inspired by grassroots advocates in Los Angeles, who followed the example set by the 1960s Delano Grape Strike, which sought an alliance between the predominantly Filipino AFL-CIO-affiliated Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee and the predominantly Mexican National Farmworkers Association to disrupt table grape harvesting in California to protest against the exploitation and abuse of migrant farm workers.

Australia

In the section about Asia, we have already seen the importance of transnational networks in pursuing decent wage and working conditions for migrant women employed in the domestic sector in GCC countries or, in the case of anti-sweatshops movements, mobilizing around the garment industry. On the one hand, this is a legacy of the global justice movement of the 2000s as it endorsed labour activism in opposition to multinational corporate structures and GSCs which furthered exploitation as well as against decreasing labour standards that especially affected the most marginal cohorts of the global workforce. In Australia, the spread of the social movements culture has significantly contributed to alliances such as the joint work of union activists and non-union feminists in the national network of Working Women Centres (Franzway 2008), which are spaces created by alliances of union and non-union feminists in coalition with unions, community groups and state agencies. Their main goal is to support women from ethnic minority backgrounds, not only migrants but also aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who suffer discrimination in the Australian labour market in addition to the very high level of segregation of their communities. This emphasis is associated with the engagement with the classic themes of unionism led by a gender perspective, such as the defence of the right to pregnancy, wage equality and so forth. One of the latest areas of their advocacy aims at having an impact in the community sphere as they deal with the defence of victimized women and the prevention of gendered domestic violence.

Russia

Although Russia does not formally belong to the OECD, it holds the status of an Associate or a Participant member on a number of OECD Committees. Its accession to the OECD was postponed "for the time being" in 2014. Notably, in 2016, Russia was ranked the fifth biggest corridor of migration in the world as migrant

labourers in the country are estimated to be approximately 9–10 million people (World Bank 2016). As reported by the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation in 2018, a sizeable part of the cohort (about 2 million people) is undocumented (MoI 2018). Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the former Western bloc was biased in considering the ex-USSR, now the Russian Federation, as a country of departure of migration flows as well as one affected by abuse upon incoming migrants (Molodikova 2020). While the latter problem did not disappear, the migratory flows into the Russian Federation have continued during the last ten years. Indeed, the extraction and refinement of natural resources (e.g. gas and oil) has triggered steady inflows of a migrant workforce from the Central Asian and Caucusus regions. Further, migrants from the Central Asian republics (e.g. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) represent the largest share of employees in agriculture, the construction industry and cleaning services.

Regulations have repeatedly been changed during the 2000s. First, in 2003, the government established a three-day period after arrival in the country to register and a three-month period to look for and find regularly contracted work. In 2007, a system of quotas was introduced to limit the number of legal work permits. In addition to the combination of these two systems, the large share of foreigners who continue to stay in the country without being regularized (Kubal 2019) is explained by the continued reliance of certain economic sectors on an irregular labour force.

This undocumented population is very often employed in the informal economy with casual contracts, waiting for the chance to fill the quotas of accepted migrants, which differ on the basis of region and nationality. The threat of deportation exposes migrants to police abuse (e.g. racial profiling and bribes) and precarious living conditions, especially in urban contexts. The SOVA Centre for Information and Analysis, a Russian NGO, tracks and denounces acts of discrimination or hate speech that largely target migrant workers.

Despite the crucial role played various informal social networks, there are also several NGOs operating across the Russian Federation with different religious, political and social backgrounds.

The main body of services they offer is formed by legal and humanitarian assistance, educational activities and humanitarian cooperation, which is provided in different languages. It is noteworthy that a great part of their legal assistance pertains to the field of labour law. In addition to their own means, some are funded through external grants and others via state funding.

Even if international humanitarian networks have been well established in the Russian Federation since the 1990s, when the first waves of refugees came from the former socialist Asian republics, the relative scarcity of native solidarity networks makes community ties and self-help the most common tool for supporting the central Asian diaspora (Poletaev 2018). Trade unions are also missing an active role in the integration of the informal labour force coming from central Asia. Just like civil society organizations, the role of trade unions in Russia must be interpreted by taking their past background into account. After 1991, the management of the new Confederation of Russian Trade Unions marked a shift towards a conceptualization of social cooperation that prioritized the needs of privatized firms instead of those of labourers (Ashwin 2004). The underpinnings of this model of industrial labour relations made it structurally inadequate to represent the interests of low-wage and vulnerable workers employed in the informal and precarious sectors of the labour market.

In response to this inadequacy, examples of alternative unionism can be found in Russia too. One example is the Moscow-based Trade Union of Migrant Workers (Profmigr), created in 2007 by some Russian activists and older migrants (Bobkova 2014). The union mediates labour disputes between migrants and their employers and provides services, information and counselling to migrants. Its activities are not limited to intermediary services as it also publishes the newspaper *Vesti Trudovoy Migratsii* (*News of Labour Migration*) and nurtures community-based networks to inform migrants and their community leaders about the latest changes in legislation and political and policy developments. The experience of this union is that it managed to demonstrate that coupling self-organization and unionism can effectively work for migrants in Russia. While being a proper union, Profmigr resembles WCs to the extent that it is excluded from the bargaining system and its main task is information and helping migrants hired in the informal economy. Even though

Box 3. The subaltern condition of migrant workers in Israel

In Israel, the main concerns pertaining to the condition of migrant workers boil down to their ethnicity. For instance, the Ethiopian community "benefits" from a Jewish status recognized by the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration and yet they do not benefit from the same connection to mainstream recruitment channels and job placement opportunities as Israeli citizens. In 2005, the Adva Centre, an Israeli policy analysis institute, compiled a report regarding the employment situation of Ethiopian Israelis (Swirski & Josef 2005) where they outlined recommendations to Israeli institutions to improve the working and living conditions of Ethiopian Israelis. The authors highlight that these migrant workers are systemically disadvantaged in the job seeking and employment process "due to lack of Hebrew language skills (especially newcomers), lack of seniority, lack of Israeli *chutzpah*, and due to stereotypes harboured by employers" (Swirski & Josef 2005, 21). On the other hand, they suggested that established community centres (e.g. the Fidel Association for Education and Social Integration of Ethiopian Jews in Israel, founded in 1997 and based in Lod) could be the ideal proxy for advocacy, counselling cultural mediation and skills training.

Besides, labour abuse in Israel intersects with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and with the forms of discrimination affecting the daily conditions of Palestinian workers, in particular for those forced to commute across the border to reach their workplaces on Israeli-controlled soil. Along with forms of police violence and discrimination being widely reported by NGOs, Palestinians are subject to discriminatory recruitment mechanisms and the downgrading of their labour and wage conditions (Ellman & Laacher 2003).

The joint report of EuroMed Rights and the International Federation for Human Rights used the expression "a contemporary form of slavery" in its title to characterize the entanglement between the discriminatory ethnic policies and the severe working conditions of non-Jewish migrant workers (e.g. Chinese, Thai, Filipino, East European, African and Latin American) employed in Israel (Ellman & Lacher 2003). The authors argued that the situation is unique because migrant labour is deliberately chosen to replace Palestinian workers as a consequence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to this study, the Israeli system is similar to the kafala system in neighbouring countries because it ties workers to a single employer with almost absolute subordination (ibid., 22). The abusive practices include smuggling by fake recruitment companies, passport confiscation (although illegal according to the Israeli penal code), xenophobic attacks and a post-2002 deportation policy implemented in close association with the inflows of newly authorized migrant workers (ibid., 30).

Profmigr has not grown to the level of being an official actor in the industrial relations system, it still counts more than 30,000 members.

2.3 Africa and Latin America

The last grouping of countries that we take into consideration is the least homogeneous. In both Africa and Latin America, there are countries that are considered rapidly growing economies, including some OECD members (Chile and Mexico) and two of the BRICS nations (Brazil and South Africa) although their internal inequalities are also extremely high. In this context, migration flows from Latin America, and especially from Central America, massively move towards the north, to the US and Canada. Only to a lesser extent are they directed to South American countries because of specific economic crises (e.g. Venezuela) or the economic unbalance between neighbouring countries (e.g. Bolivia and Argentina or Peru and Chile). A large proportion of Latin American migrants search for jobs in Europe too, especially in Spain and Italy. Africa, however, has the largest share of its population moving inside the continent, usually as a first step for a longer migration project to Europe or, more recently, to the Gulf countries or the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region at large.

African industrial relations systems are a legacy of the colonial period in the extractive or railway sectors. In South Africa, for example, the Congress of South African Trade Unions

(COSATU) played a central role in the anti-apartheid movement. Nonetheless, it is generally accepted that the post-apartheid transition years saw a decline in its importance (Runciman 2016) and a rising relevance of informal protests and mobilizations. These developments are caused by the social fragmentation induced by neoliberal policies. One of the main lines of criticism is that COSATU has developed internal policies on migration, gender issues and xenophobia consistent with the rising xenophobia that has intensified in South Africa against migrants and female workers since 2008. The main critique is that the union chose to act on the level of public messages, legal advocacy and recruitment of migrant members whilst it underplayed its potential as a leader for grassroots change in its unions, communities and townships (Hlatshwayo 2010). As a response, independent migrants' unions such as the Migrant Workers' Union of South Africa (MIWUSA), which originated from the previous union of Zimbabwean workers called ZIWUSA and a rising relevance of informal protest and mobilization took place. Unions like MIWUSA and other grassroots social movements share the common goal of deploying community actions that have the mission of tackling the rising inequalities, social fragmentation and welfare restructuring that came as a result of the South African neoliberal transition.

Therefore, "working poor" movements thus strove to play the same role in South Africa that industrial unionism had in the 1980s (Webster & Englert 2020). In addition, the contemporary South African labour market is dominated by a type of informal daily labour that is much more corrosive for workers than that seen in Western countries (Theodore et al. 2014) because it is related to extreme conditions of subsistence.

The trajectory of WCs in South Africa is similar to that of trade unions (Ryabchuk & Wilderman 2017) when these were banned in the 1970s. WCs were fundamentally important in addressing workers' needs in order to organize workplace claims, but they were also important in the political struggle against the discrimination towards black people. After the passing of the national Labour Relations Act of 1995, which regulates the organizational rights of trade unions and defines strict procedures for labour dispute resolution (through either the officially established Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration or independent, alternative dispute resolution services accredited for that purpose), it became challenging for WCs to justify their important contributions in providing legal counselling. This missing element is detrimental to the potential role WCs could play in South African society today (Ryabchuk 2017).

There is limited literature about other African WC networks, but the available research highlights the case of street vendors' unions (Brown et al. 2010) as labour associations representing informal labour. Street vending as part of the informal sector represents a substantial part of economic urban life of the Global South. Street vending often occurs without formal licenses, and it is usually practiced as a means of self-sustenance. At the same time, it provides commodities to the poor population outside formalized tax and regulatory systems. One of the problems with this practice is that it is carried out in available open spaces without any legal authorization, and urban development has continuously put the vital space for this self-employed population in danger as a result of the changing spatial divisions of the city. For these "autonomous workers," collective mobilization is the only means of defending their business. As the organization gets larger and more stable over time, it will get better results in negotiations with local governments. For example, the struggle of the street market union in Durban to maintain spaces for informal trade before the World Football Championship is a well-known case (Motala 2002). Other issues faced by street vendors' unions include the revenues local governments try to extract from the sector and the bribes that the police and mafia extract. Finally, most of the African street vendors are women because street vending represents an immediate solution to reconcile familial duties with paid work. This exposes female street vendors to specific risks of harassment (Mittahla 2005).

As for Latin American countries, prominent ones such as Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Mexico present authoritarian legacies and corporatist traditions when it comes to understanding the modalities of unionizing and bargaining (Bensusan 2016). Union membership and representation in the workplace by the official unions usually is mandatory, and collective bargaining is exclusively reserved for those unions that have been recognized as fully entitled to exert the right to bargain. This industrial labour relations model imposes a Latin-American

Box 4. The Salt River Community Centre in Cape Town (South Africa)

The condition of migrant workers' attainment of visas in South Africa is bound to the Immigration Act 13 of 2002, which disallows the employment of migrant workers or foreign nationals who are not in possession of a valid work permit. According to the 2017 Fact sheet on foreign workers in South Africa (ACMS 2017), four per cent of the South African workforce is composed of non-South African-born foreigners who are concentrated in urban areas and who are twice as employed in comparison to South African-born workers in the informal sector with highly precarious, hazardous, and labour-intensive tasks, i.e. stepping stones in the informal labour market, domestic work (with a prevalence of female workers), and the agricultural and hospitality sectors. By definition, the informal sector is subject to inordinate degrees of employers' discretion and abuse, and therefore, to vast difficulty in guaranteeing workers' rights and unionization. Trade unions are recognized by the Labour Relations Act of South Africa as a key collective bargaining partner in the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac), a tripartite negotiation council that includes government, businesses and labour representatives sorted by productive sectors.

Within this legal framework, WCs have emerged in South Africa in the form of community houses gathering different types of community and activist-based organizations. One example is represented by the case of Community House in Salt River, Cape Town, an established, active community centre that has hosted the Labour Research Service (LRS) since the 1980s. It is a community history museum that has been functioning as the Trade Union Library and its archive. Alongside research and repository functions, the Community House has also served as an organizational hub for the anti-apartheid movement since the 1980s. After the ban against political organizations was removed in 1990, the Community House became a hub for the labour movement's promotion of equality and democracy (LRS 2018). Nowadays, it houses 24 organizations with different statuses and structures, but which share a commitment toward social justice, "labour research, popular education, gender advocacy, HIV/AIDS education, environmental issues, youth development, media production and union organization" (Community House 2017). These also include trade unions mobilizing migrant workers such as the COSATU, the Independent Commercial Hospitality and Allied Workers Union, the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union, and the Whole World Women Association. It was declared a provincial heritage in 2010, and it is protected by special status under South African national law.

translation of the macro-narrative of the decline of trade unions (Arriaga 2018). In fact, the analytical indicators pertaining to the Anglo-Saxon world (e.g. union density and the number of signed agreements between firms and unions) do not suffice in order to analyse the phenomenon of the decay of unions in Latin America, where it coincides with the neoliberal transitions of the 1980s and 1990s. During this period, neither the union density nor the number of strikes declined in the same measure as Western countries, but bargaining activities were decentred at the local level, disempowering official unions enormously (Atzeni Ghigliani 2007).

The extent to which union density has declined has to be weighed taking the share of unregistered and informal economy workers into account. The latter increased significantly as the labour market was deregulated during the 1990s since informal workers are not counted among the workers paying their dues, even if – as we are going to see below – they have their own forms of organization. One prominent case study in this respect is the Argentinian one (see the case study on page 61). On the one hand, it epitomizes the dramatic shifts that occurred in various Latin American countries in terms of political regimes and economic paradigms, which inevitably affected the formation and course of action of unions. On the other, it was remarkably capable of generating new forms of unionism from its crisis.

Unions coped with this peculiar context by developing internal debates like the one that mobilized one of the Argentinian centers

Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), and from which an alternative confederation of unions, the Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina, (CTA), stemmed during the early 1990s. The latter was only partially recognized by the state since it was denied permission to bargain at a national level. Ideally, the CTA was inspired by the rhetoric of the social movement unionism (Moody 2001) and the US style of community unionism as its action aimed at organizing the *barrio* (neighbourhood), and its membership was sought among unusual constituencies such as unemployed, small, informal and autonomous workers. This deep methodological innovation was rooted in a Latin-American debate about the transition from the working class to popular coalitions and from organized unions to labour movements (Rossi 2020). Yet, in the case of CTA, this transition was not realized completely during the years of so-called *Kirchnerism* (Armelino 2012). In fact, the abandonment of a class-based approach in favour of a civic focus made the CTA's claims compatible with the governmental growth and development agenda (Ghiotto 2007). Besides, distrust for unions was prompted by the vicious cycle of unattended governmental announcements of new job placements directed at the unemployed population and the waiting game played by the big unions. Against this backdrop, post–2001 unionism conflates with another relevant political-economic shift.

Moreover, the Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular (CTEP) is a confederation that groups grassroots and community unions that organize the most marginal segments of the labour market (e.g. informal workers in Buenos Aires) as well as unemployed urban dwellers. It was founded in 2011 after a failed attempt to request the CGT to recognize it as an internal organization (Fernandez-Alvarez 2018). It was started through the initiative of Movimiento Evita and Movimiento de Trabajadores Excluidos, which were both social movements rooted in the southern neighbourhoods of Buenos Aires. The latter is a movement of unemployed people, whilst the former used to be a sort of union organizing the so-called *cartoneros*, waste pickers and recyclers, who represent a very typical modality of scraping as a means of subsistence all over Latin America. Later, the CTEP was joined by various community organizations and rural unions such as Movimiento Popular la Dignidad, CTD Aníbal Verón, Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas, Movimiento Nacional Campesino Indígena, Organización Libres del Pueblo, Los Pibes, Octubres, La Poderosa, and so on, counting more than 300,000 members. The common cultural and political background of the majority of these groups was Peronist *justicialismo* and a criticism of capitalism advanced from a social-Christian perspective, even if Marxist branches of the confederation are also present (Fernandez-Alvarez 2018). The CTEP gained some visibility during the summer of 2016 with a huge rally in the Argentinian capital, which launched definitively the paradigm of "*economía popular*", a label underpinned by the intent to recompose subaltern populations beyond the traditional working class and the classic redistributive conflict. In practice, *economía popular* theorizes the dignification of marginal economic activities through workers' control over them, e.g. by forming worker-led cooperatives (Grabois Persico 2017). One of the reasons for the growth of this approach is that post-default governmental industrial labour relations policies incentivized the creation of cooperatives as in the case of the national employment plan, Plan Argentina Trabaja (Argentina at Work). The CTEP is organized into eight branches:

- Waste pickers
- Rural workers
- Workers of sweatshops outsourced from the garment industry
- Motor delivery boys
- Street vendors
- Fair workers
- Craftsmen
- Unemployed

In all these different activities, the CTEP works as a trigger for the integration of these workers in the formal economy. In the case of waste pickers, it stimulates the creation of cooperatives and the hiring of their members in the municipally-owned firms entitled to collect waste. In the case of street vendors, it fights for the release of official selling licenses, whilst in the case of rural workers, it fights for land redistribution, and so on. When cooperatives are established, they begin to work as a proxy for making the labour

market accessible for many marginal workers and unemployed people.

Similar movements with like ideological underpinnings can be tracked in other countries, e.g. Brazil (Milani 2019). This network of actors, which blends social movements, self-employment and organizing, rather than being identical to US WCs, resembles the community unions that had spread in the US since the late 1970s more closely. The transformation of the very structural basis of the Latin American political economy introduced the issue of the role of the unemployed and urban casual workers in the labour movements. *Economía popular* is one of the ways that was experimented with to manage it.

A final reported combination between rural work and self-employment in the trade sector refers to the state of Alagoas in North-Eastern Brazil. In this case, the work of selling through street fairs all around the state empowered workers both as farmers and as women (Bento de Lima 2020). This process was enforced by the self-organization of female peasant-traders in the rural union, Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas, which created self-organized networks supporting women in setting prices and transporting their crops to fairs.

3. Gender and intersectionality

In 2017, women were estimated to comprise 41.6 per cent of the total migrant workers in the world (ILO 2018, 12). Migrant women also had higher participation rates in the labour force in comparison to non-migrants at 63.5 per cent and 48.1 per cent respectively. Migrant women are predominantly found in domestic and care work or other service industries (such as restaurants, supermarkets, etc.), and to a lesser extent in sweatshops, manufacturing and entertainment (ILO n.d., 2018). Regardless of the sector, migrant women are prone to discrimination, stigmatization, harassment and violence in the workplace, and they are strongly impacted by discriminatory policies and legislations, especially those related to migration. Previous studies have documented that migrant women have been subject to low wages, long working hours, poor working conditions, sexual harassment and violence, and repression of their freedom of association (Esim & Smith 2004; FIDH 2014; Hierofani 2016; Cobble 2007; Lan 2006; Wright 2006).

Cobble (2007, 3) argued that women's labour position has shifted from the margins to the centre of the working class, but our understanding of women's movements for their labour rights is still limited. In the past, unions were built to respond to the needs of "typical" employees who worked full-time and were blue-collar male workers (Yuki 2008). Women, including migrant women, however, have changed the composition of the workforce and thus labour movements have to take that into account. Studies on women's participation in unions have criticized unions as gendered institutions. Unions are often unwilling – or unable – to organize workers in sectors where collective bargaining is unfeasible (Sullivan & Lee 2008), and these are the sectors in which migrant women workers are predominantly employed. Other studies have found that male union leaders are sometimes reluctant to organize women workers and refer to them as 'unorganizable' (Jenkins 2013, 633; Milkman 2007, 65). In the agenda of unions, female workers experience marginalization in issues such as the right to work free from discrimination, the right to equal remuneration, maternity and health protection, social benefits, flexible working hours and childcare support (Francisco & dela Cruz 2008). The establishment of women's unions is a result of the failure of unions to provide sufficient representation for women members (Bhattacharya et al. 2016; Broadbent 2005, 2007).

However, a change is gradually taking place as women workers take more active and leadership roles in unions. Women union activists denounce sexist remarks and behaviour at labour conferences (Francisco & dela Cruz 2008; Mills 2005), and thus break the silence about the patriarchal and sexist culture in unions. Change is also taking place with strong women's committees (Yuki 2008). Women union activists play an important role in promoting the recruitment of women as union members and improving labour standards for women (Franzway & Fonow 2008), and newly established unions are also more receptive to these issues (Milkman 2007). Despite the trend of feminization in unions as noted, among others, in the US and India (Mazumdar & N 2020; Milkman 2007), Milkman (2007) argued that unions in the US are still highly segmented along lines of gender, race/ethnicity and industry. In terms of segregation based on gender and sector, male union members are typically blue collar and employed in the private sector, while female union members are white collar and employed in education, healthcare or public administration (Milkman 2007, 71). Segregation along race and ethnicity is also found within the same gender category. White women union members are mostly employed in education; black women in healthcare, public administration and transportation; Asian women in healthcare; and Hispanic women are evenly distributed across industries but hold a larger share in manufacturing (Milkman 2007, 71-73).

While women workers in general experience discrimination based on gender, it is important to view the discrimination experienced by female migrant workers by using intersectional perspectives. Intersectionality emerged as a critique by black feminists of the marginalization, discrimination and violence against black women by both black movements and feminist

movements (Crenshaw 1991; Reyes & Mulinari 2005; Hooks 2015). It is not always possible, in fact, to distinguish whether the discrimination experienced by a black woman worker is a result of her identity as black, a woman, or a member of the working class (Yuval-Davies 2005, 22). Rather, it is the intersection of racial, gender, class and other social identities that jointly causes her specific discrimination. Women who are also migrant workers often experience the same intersectional discrimination in addition to other discrimination on other grounds such as nationality, immigration status and sometimes sexuality (as part of LGBTIQ+ categories). This unique position adds to the feeling of exclusion in unions and labour rights movements among women migrant workers (Bernardino-Costa 2014). In this regard, WCs have often been seen as an alternative site for migrant women to engage in labour rights movements.

In a study by Fine, she found that only 19 per cent of 40 WCs in the US focused primarily on women, and 57 per cent were of mixed gender (Fine 2007, 215–216). More specifically, the stance of WCs on the needs of women migrant workers defines the extent to which they integrate women's issues in their organizing. For instance, Fine (2007) identified La Mujer Obrera, founded in El Paso in 1981, as the first WC in the US that was established by and focused specifically on migrant women. Situated on the border with Mexico, La Mujer Obrera was established in response to the loss of jobs faced by Mexican women workers in the textile manufacturing industry after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Domestic Workers United in New York, the Garment Worker Center in Los Angeles, Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) in San Francisco, Colectiva Feminista Binacional in the Tijuana-San Diego border region, the Migrant Community Center in Beirut, the Hope Workers' Center in Taiwan, the Chinese Working Women Network and Sunflower Women, which operate in Guangdong, and the Garment Mahila Karmikara Munnade (Munnade) in Bengaluru are some examples of WCs that focus mainly on women workers and/or have feminist perspectives.

Women's WCs have gender and intersectional perspectives permeating every aspect of their work. Their members are primarily women workers, they organize workers in sectors dominated by women, they incorporate gender and intersectional analyses in their education and member/leadership development materials, and most importantly, they recognize women as important actors in wider social justice movements (Chun et al. 2013; Liu 2017; Sullivan & Lee 2008; Téllez 2013). Unlike typical WCs that take a neighbourhood-based approach in their community organizing, women's WCs tend to build on their shared identities as racialized women workers, as a strategy for their organizing (Chun et al. 2013). The intersectional perspective views gender-based discrimination as entangled with discrimination based on other identities, such as race/ethnicity, immigration status and class. By viewing these identities as intersecting in causing the discrimination experienced by members, women's WCs address the discrimination as a structural problem and even reclaim all these identities in order to empower their members. This perspective also allows women's WCs to relate more easily to the broader communities that also fight for social justice. In doing so, they not only raise awareness about the working conditions and rights of women workers (Broadbent 2007), but also include other marginalized labour issues such as discrimination against sexual minorities (Hunt & Boris 2007).

Some WCs, meanwhile, have established separate groups for women workers. The National Mobilization Against Sweatshops, which was founded by youth members of the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association in New York, and the Women's Collective, which is part of the Worker Power Center in San Francisco, are a few examples. The Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment in South Carolina and the Tenants' and Workers' Support Committee, meanwhile, have specific training and leadership programmes that target women workers. In countries where freedom of association is severely limited for migrant women, like migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, informal, ethnicity-based and faith-based workers' networks and collectives are forms of "meso-level resistance" that are crucial for the organization of workers (Pande 2012).

Challenges and possibilities for women migrant workers in WCs

The literature shows that the WCs for women workers have distinct characters in their organizing in comparison to other centres. This is a response to the distinct industrial relations

where women workers are predominantly employed, gender roles in relation to family and society and the immigration status of women workers. Here, we present some challenges and possibilities for WCs as identified from the literature.

a. Devaluation of women's work

Profit-making businesses benefit from racialized and gendered discourses to create the feminization – and racialization – of labour, which causes the devaluation of women's work. Discourses such as *maquiladora* and factory workers as "disposable women" who are discarded and easily replaced once their labour value expires (Wright 2006; Mezzadri 2017), and those categorizing women from the Third World as having the "nimble fingers" needed in export-oriented manufacturing industries (Elson & Pearson 1981) show that the commodification and exploitation of women workers are built on racialized and gendered arguments. These discourses create a demand for labourers of a specific gender, class and race/ethnicity from determined parts of the world, who are willing to work in poor conditions in exchange for some income. Their labour is devalued through arguments such as the large supply of labour and the inherently "natural" skills of these workers. The management of women workers at the shop-floor level relies on stereotypical gender roles of male supervisors at the middle and upper levels and female machine operators as part of the manual labour force (Wright 2006), and it resorts to gender-based violence, such as verbal and sexual harassment, to effectively control and discipline the workers in order to achieve high production and profitability (Global Labour Justice & Asia Floor Wage Alliance 2019; ILO 2012a).

Participation in the labour market, as well as labour migration, allows women workers to gain economic independence and experience upward mobility. It is common that they become the main, or even the sole, breadwinners of their families. This, nevertheless, creates a clash of ideologies in gender relations where men are traditionally the breadwinners (Parreñas 2007). Despite the importance of their earnings for the survival of the family, the devaluation of women's work causes women workers to be reluctant to see their work as "real" work (Fine 2007). Domestic and care work, for instance, are viewed as women's motherhood duties and the employment of migrant women in this sector is thus seen as an extension of this duty (Anderson 2000). Consequently, migrant domestic workers sometimes do not consider what they do as work. Similarly, women engaged in informal – often home-based – garment work do not have a strong identity as workers because they work in separate houses and, therefore, lack a collective identity (Gross & Kharate 2017, 18).

To challenge the devaluation of women's work, WCs raise the awareness of women workers by introducing a labour rights curriculum in their education programs. Justice for Domestic Workers, which was based in London, for instance, encouraged their members to use the term "workers" rather than "servants" when they described themselves (Jiang & Korczynski 2016, 826). AIWA, meanwhile, not only supported migrant women to diagnose occupational health and safety problems in the garment industry in San Francisco, but also empowered them to become experts on ergonomic safety as a result of their experiences of poor working conditions (Chun et al. 2013). Sometimes, however, WCs need to be strategic and opt for an innovative approach in reaching workers to overcome the deeply ingrained devaluation of women's care work. Fuerza Laboral Feminina in Long Island, USA, for instance, consciously used the term "*mujeres que trabajan en casa*" (women who work in the home), rather than "*trabajadoras domésticas*" (domestic workers), when they initially approached female workers. The latter term tended to evoke the sense of being members of the lowest rung of the working class and, thus, created strong negative reactions (Fine 2007: 218).

SEWA in India, meanwhile, utilized a multi-pronged and multi-layered strategy to make the voices of women workers heard and to make the valuable economic contribution of home-based workers visible (Sinha 2013). Despite being registered as a trade union as well as being affiliated to the ITUC,[8] SEWA's membership base was home-based workers across sectors. By highlighting the collective experiences of workers across sectors, SEWA contributed to expanding the definition of workplace to include the home,

8 ITUC, *List of affiliated organizations*, 2012.

and thus, safety and health issues in the homes of the workers could also be addressed. Their efforts, however, have barely resulted in any change in the labour law as the code on wages, which recently became a law, still defines an employee in relation to an establishment or industry and thus excludes private households (Mazumdar & N 2020).

The strategic use of the term "worker", the expansion of the definition of workplace and the empowerment of workers as primary agents of change are all necessary to challenge the devaluation of women's work. In doing so, WCs situate the experiences of workers as gendered subjects in complex industrial relations.

b. Gendered repression of freedom of association by employers

As argued in the previous section, the labour commodification and exploitation of migrant women draws on racialized gendered discourses to recruit young, cheap and docile workers. Not only are these women recruited based on these discourses, they are also made to stay docile as part of the making of "ideal" workers (Lan 2018; Liang 2011; Mezzadri 2017; Rodriguez & Schwenken 2013). Discrimination, intimidation and harassment – including sexual harassment – have been seen to be used on factory floors to keep workers docile, including to prevent and repress the participation of women workers in unions (Merk 2009; Fair Wear Foundation n.d.; Gross 2013; Jenkins 2013; Mezzadri 2017; Téllez 2013). Female union leaders experience harassment not only from management, but also from other male union leaders (ILO 2012a; Jenkins 2013). This results in the low participation of women workers in unions, let alone as union leaders (Milkman 2007, ILO 2012a).

One of the unique characteristics of WCs is their community-based approach vis-à-vis the institutional and legal status of unions (Sullivan 2010). The presence of WCs is, therefore, less threatening to employers as they do not have legal status as trade unions. In addition to community issues, women's WCs often use "women's issues" such as domestic violence, kitchen collectives and education as part of their organizing strategies (Jenkins 2013; Téllez 2013; Chun et al. 2013). The Garment Mahila Karmikara Munnade (Munnade) used community issues such as microfinance credits, domestic violence, access to public services, and education to introduce women garment workers in Bengaluru to labour rights issues. This eventually led to the establishment of the GATWU once members became more aware of their labour rights. While the presence of Munnade was less threatening to the companies' management, the participation of women workers in GATWU was repressed through bribery, intimidation and even dismissal (Jenkins 2013). In the context of powerful patriarchal trade union systems, such as in the tea plantation area in North Bengal, the framing of WCs' activities as "women's social work" – and not as unions – was also necessary so as not to threaten male union leaders (Chatterjee 2008: 501).

Women workers face the repression of their freedom of association as part of the racialized and gendered construction of "ideal" workers. The strategy of using "women's issues" and community issues poses less of a threat to managements and male union leaders and allows women workers to organize themselves through WCs. Although WCs often lack legal and institutional status, at least when compared to formal trade unions, it does not diminish the importance of WCs as a safe space for women to cope, develop trust, empower themselves, build networks and mobilize collective actions and collective bargaining (Jiang & Korczynski 2016; Chun et al. 2013).

c. Balancing work, family and activism

Patriarchal gender norms expect women to prioritize family over work or community engagement, and thus limit women's participation in the public sphere. Women workers – especially those who live in isolated factory dormitories or who migrate to urban areas or abroad – sometimes become stigmatized as having loose morals and dubious character (Chambers 2020; Lan 2008). Depending where in their lifecycle the workers are, unmarried young women are affected by these stigmas more often in comparison to married, older women. The entry of women into the public sphere, such as paid and productive work, threatens patriarchal gender norms that associate women with the private sphere such as in families. In addition to these stigmas, male family members, such as the husband or father, may also object to and prohibit women workers from participating in unions or going to WCs (Gross 2013; Téllez 2013; Mills 2005; Gross & Kharate 2017). These contribute to the reluctance

of women workers to participate in WCs and, therefore, create challenges for WCs to recruit and engage workers. In addition, long working hours, sometimes until late at night, limit women workers from spending time with their families and leave very little extra time to get involved in a WC's activities (Chun et al. 2013; Jenkins 2013; Gross & Kharate 2017).

The active participation of women in WCs thus disrupts the traditional gendered public/private divide. Studies on women unions, WCs and community organizers have shown that they face additional challenges in balancing work, family and activism (Schurman 2004; Fine et al. 2018a; Liu 2017). The struggle faced by women activists to balance these different aspects of their lives often sparks discussions about gender and family relations, specifically on the responsibility of doing unpaid reproductive work. Despite the various stands of female activists on these issues, these discussions sometimes result in the negotiation of gender and family relations for individual members, which, in turn, empowers them to continue their activism.

> Getting men to accept changes in domestic responsibilities; winning new respect from children for developing new knowledge and skills; viewing their roles as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters as important conditions of their existence rather than their total identities; and developing trusting, purposeful, and caring relations with people outside their families all contributed to building a new sense of personhood and possibility. (Chun et al. 2013, 216)

Box 5. Self-organization of women migrant workers in Argentina

Argentina is one of the countries in South America where incoming migration started early on. Migrant workers from Bolivia and Peru were the most numerous groups, but there also are recent inflows of citizens from Venezuela or Senegal. The criminalization of migrants is manifested in legal reforms such as the 70/2017 decree that determined the deportation of migrants with any criminal record, even after they were sentenced for the least serious offences. According to the recently created Bloque de Trabajadores Migrantes (Bloc of Migrant Workers), more than 70,000 migrants have been put on hold while trying to regularize their residence permits even after two years in the country, and a larger number remains fully undocumented (AC 2020).

The new government has hardly changed any aspect of the migration regime due to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. Among the many organizations rejecting the official migration policy and supporting migrant workers is the Asociación de Mujeres Unidas Migrantes y Refugiadas de Argentina (Association of United Migrant and Refugee Women in Argentina, AMUMRA). They have a meeting centre in Buenos Aires but, as we were informed by one of their members, Macarena Romero, some migrants have also opened a branch in the neighbourhood of Quilmes following violent assaults, requisitions and blackmailing by the local police in 2018. The main activities of AMUMRA are legal assistance, legislative change and protest actions and campaigns.

They provide services such as Spanish lessons for Senegalese women and legal training on human rights and human trafficking. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most of their assistance has been focused on labour rights, regularization of migrants' permits and access to the emergency subsidies provided by the state. In this period, they have been forced to use various online tools (Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom, etc.) rather than meeting at their regular organizational places. Labour issues are as important as legal and community ones for AMUMRA. A special approach to violence against women at work and in society at large stands out in their programmes and public notices. Although advocacy involves the participation of native lawyers, the association promotes the self-organization of women and migrant communities through roving information centres (*carpas itinerantes*) and also permanent spaces in the informal settlements across the metropolitan region, which focus on rights and organizing tools. AMUMRA also participates in political bodies based on civil society participation, such as the Observatorio de Migración y Refugio (Observatory of Migration and Refuge), and it allies with other national and international organizations such as REDLAC, GAATW and MIREDES International.

Women's WCs try to overcome the challenges of balancing work, family and activism by adopting an informal, family-friendly organizing approach, versus a typically formal union meetings. The Chinese Staff and Workers' Association in New York, for instance, allowed members to bring children or other family members to the centre (Liu 2017). This resulted in more people going to the centre and joining as members as they were inspired by the engagement of their family members in the WC. Munnade and GATWU in Bengaluru, meanwhile, chose to organize meetings in members' homes after work, rather than at the centre, as a more convenient and safe option for the members. Those organizations working for domestic workers, such as Fuerza Laboral Feminina and Domestic Workers United, meanwhile, approached domestic workers at places where workers usually assembled during their free time or days off (Fine 2007).

Some WCs even supported the establishment of youth groups to support multigenerational empowerment strategies (Liu 2017; Chun et al. 2013). The National Mobilization Against Sweatshops, for instance, was originally founded by youth members of CSWA. AIWA, meanwhile, developed the Youth Build Immigrant Power Project as part of their youth component.

Gender norms regarding public/private divides and productive/reproductive work also bring challenges for women workers to balance work, family and activism. Women's WCs have, however, come up with an alternative approach to the typically formal form of union organizing. The incorporation of the family perspective in the WCs' activities allows women members to renegotiate traditional gender and family relations. It even allows family members to get involved in WCs, through youth groups among other activities, which, consequently, is beneficial for WCs to ensure multigenerational engagement. In doing so, WCs initiate discussions about workers as gendered subjects enmeshed in a complex industrial, familial and societal relationship (Liu 2017). Nevertheless, WCs need to thread discussions carefully to create genuine bottom-up awareness among workers. If the discussion is not led by the workers themselves, there is a risk that it may become an intervention for individual workers, which shifts the problem from the structural level to the individual level (Grajeda 2019).

d. Institutional constraints

The struggle to find sustainable funding sources, the lack of sufficient networks and the limited impact at the industry-wide level, among other factors, have been identified as limitations of WCs (Fine 2006), although the establishment of national federations has helped in securing bigger funding sources and broadening both the network and impact of WCs (Fine 2011; Fine et al. 2018b). For WCs focusing on women workers, these challenges are rooted in gender, class, ethnicity and specific industrial relations.

The struggle to secure funding sources for women WCs, for instance, is tied to the literacy, as well as the financial and accounting skills, of the organizers. This could be a huge constraint for small and local women's WCs whose members have experienced structural marginalization based on gender, ethnicity and class. Reflecting on the experience of the Dooars Jagron (for tea plantation workers in North Bengal) with regard to receiving funding support from a local Indian NGO, Chatterjee (2008) argued that the strict accountability structures required by the NGO reflected middle-class, upper-caste, literate and masculinist ideologies. The accountability structures required the WC to restructure its organization, including with the appointment of literate external men for financial and accounting issues, because most primary plantation organizers are illiterate women. Frantz and Fernandez (2018) warned about the tendency of national WCs in the US to adopt neoliberal rationalities when they receive funding from philanthropical organizations. Although national WCs often highlight their staff and board members who are women or minorities, they obscure their class and non-worker backgrounds (Frantz and Fernandez 2018, 651). Grant applications, accountability and relationship building with funding organizations requires professional organizers, who are more likely middle-class, educated, non-workers and sometimes men. This, in turn, may create tension in the organization as a result of value differences (Chatterjee 2008; Grajeda 2019).

As argued previously, women workers often experience limited freedom of association as a consequence of gendered industrial relations. The physical isolation of factory workers in dormitories, domestic workers in private houses, self-employed home-based workers in their own homes, or plantation workers dispersed across

huge agricultural areas hinders the organizing of workers (Pande 2012; Sinha 2013; Chatterjee 2008). Freedom of association often is almost non-existent for immigrant workers due to their migration status. WCs, therefore play an important role in encouraging women workers to come together, regardless of their physical locations, as a group that experiences common problems and that could benefit from collective action (Fine 2007). To join strategic networks and alliances with, for instance, women's groups, faith-based groups, human rights organizations, legal advocates, government officials, student activists and other community members, could benefit women WCs while building a stronger collective voice. Further, networks and alliances could provide valuable moral support for WCs especially in times of long and difficult campaigns (Chun et al. 2013). Joint campaigns with networks and alliances could also alleviate the pressure on members whose mobility and activism are limited as a result of their work.

Transnational networks and alliances, in particular, could provide necessary support for WCs that focus on migrant women (see also the section on transnational campaigns in chapter 5). This form of networks and alliances allows WCs to build strategic cooperation across national borders between those in countries of employment and those in origin countries. Téllez (2013), for instance, argued that binational collaboration between the Colectiva Feminista Binacional and other activists in the US/Mexico border region is an important strategy to build a collective *transfronteriza* identity. Collaboration with similar WCs in the border region, among them Workers Information Center and the San Diego Maquiladora Workers' Solidarity Network, also allows Colectiva Feminista Binacional to arrange cross-border actions, such as a simultaneous protest in front of a factory in Tijuana and the factory owner's house in San Diego.

Hsia (2009) found that the Asian Migrants' Coordinating Body, as a national alliance of migrant worker associations and unions, plays an important role in breaking down the construction of differences based on racialized and gendered stereotypes of different migrant groups. A national alliance as such gives migrant workers who are members of WCs and unions a space to meet workers from other countries and to challenge racialized constructions, which are often used by recruitment agencies and migrant-sending countries to build a comparative advantage for a specific migrant group.

The adoption of the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201) is a successful example of the national and transnational alliances of WCs playing an active role in establishing a global standard. A study by Boris and Undén (2017) documented that the collaboration of the National Domestic Worker Alliance (NDWA) with various allies during the making of Convention No. 189 was crucial in creating momentum for the establishment of decent work standards for domestic workers in the US. A joint statement between the NDWA and AFL-CIO, for instance, allowed the voices of domestic workers to be heard in the International Labour Conference during the making of the convention. The NDWA thereafter strategically utilized Convention No. 189 when pushing for the adoption of the Domestic Worker's Bill of Rights in various states in the US.

As shown here, collaboration with networks and alliances could be beneficial for women WCs, but it could also be challenging. Differing values between WCs and other network and alliance members could potentially create tensions (Ford 2008; Xin 2008; Bernardino-Costa 2014), which could consequently affect the success of campaigns. In a reflection on the collaboration between Unite the Union and Justice for Domestic Workers, Jiang and Korczynski (2016, 829) therefore argued that the maintenance of independence and autonomy of WCs is as important as strong links with other progressive organizations.

e. LGBTIQ+: A potential emerging issue

Discrimination and violence in the workplace against sexual minorities are not new issues. Yet it was not until the 1970s that the issue of workplace discrimination against lesbian and gay workers gained momentum in the labour movement in the US (Hunt & Boris 2007). As more and more members come forward to report discrimination, caucuses and groups focusing on the rights of lesbian and gay workers are being created in various unions. Pride at Work, which was founded in 1992, became the first national cross-union queer labour group in the US, and in 1997, it became affiliated with the AFL-CIO (Hunt & Boris 2007).

The Movement Advancement Project (MAP) estimated that there are 5.4 million LGBTIQ+ workers in the US, 1.8 million of which are workers of colour (MAP et al. 2013: 3). As a result of their sexual orientations and identities, and their migrant (and sometimes undocumented) status, LGBTIQ+ people of colour experience a higher level of discrimination in the workplace. They experience discrimination in the recruitment process and in promotions, unequal pay and benefits, and they have difficulties in acquiring legal work authorization (MAP et al. 2013; MAP & National LGBTQ Workers Center 2018).

The National LGBTQ Workers Center is a WC based in Chicago that has queer and transgender people of colour as their main membership base. The WC was founded in 2018 by Joan Jones, a former Service Employees International Union organizer (Sarkar 2019). The centre has become the first WC focussing on fighting discrimination against LGBTQ people of colour in the workplace.

Filipino Lesbian Organization (FILO) and Filguys Gabriela Hong Kong, which are migrant worker-led Filipino lesbian organizations in Hong Kong, organized a migrants' pride event for the first time in the country in 2015. While the Hong Kong government has been tolerant towards migrant workers' unions and their activism since the 1980s (Constable 2009), migrant LGBTIQ+ activism finally gained momentum after the year 2000 as the general public gained more awareness about their rights (Lai 2018). Unlike Hong Kong Pride, which always takes place on a Saturday, Migrants' Pride is held on a Sunday to facilitate the participation of migrant workers whose day off is usually on Sunday. Although there are differing views on strategies to engage a wider base of LGBTIQ+ migrant workers in the movement, the pride strategically creates inclusive slogans, such as 'Rise with Pride, Rise for Justice', which can be agreed upon by migrant workers regardless of their sexual orientation (Lai 2018). The participation of migrant domestic workers in the recent Migrants' Pride was notable as they joined together to push for better wages, rights and respect (Ting 2019). The background of the organizers, as both migrant workers and LGBTIQ+ people, provides a unique intersectional perspective which contributes to the integration of labour and sexuality perspectives both in migrant worker activism and LGBTIQ+ activism.

4. WCs as safe and autonomous spaces

The previous analyses about WCs worldwide and their socio-spatial contextualization underpin the analytical necessity of extending the notion of WCs to include those physical as well as online activities that are meant to help pursue decent wages and living conditions for disenfranchized workers. The latter often includes migrant workers employed in various economic sectors, ranging from domestic work to globalized manufacturing and logistics chains. The implications of migrant and capital mobility, therefore, affect the forms and capacities of WCs to effectively organize and defend fundamental rights. WCs, thus, aim at facilitating unionizing and the defence of rights by shielding workers from repression by the state and employers, furthering the implementation of progressive labour legislation, and so on. Further, different studies have shown the intertwining of border management and migratory policies with labour regulations related to wages, occupational safety and health and institutionalized collective bargaining (Choudry & Hlatshwayo 2016; Mezzadra & Neilson 2013; Moody 2001; Nicholls & Uitermark 2017). For instance, the individualized nature of labour relations combined with migratory systems such as the kafala further hinders the chances of collective organizing for domestic workers in countries where unionizing is already residual or even prohibited.

Lastly, the structure of GVCs may determine differential labour conditions across different stages of the production and distribution process. For instance, the abusive conditions experienced by migrant labourers employed in sportswear factories in Vietnam do not nearly correspond to the labour standards applied in the overseas retail sector, as the Behind the Label (Mullen & Maher 2011) and Maquila Solidarity Network (2008) reports aptly highlight. In order to assess the operations of WCs within those contexts, this section examines the WCs' features as safe and autonomous spaces and their relations with the local communities.

Safe spaces

If we narrow the focus to migrant labourers, we can observe the implications of mobility patterns and border policies on the methodologies and composition that define WCs. Indeed, the obligations set by a specific migration system affect recruitment dynamics, as well as the very possibility to quit a specific job and waive union rights, as repeatedly emphasized by migration and legal scholars, historians and sociologists (Steinfled 1991; Moulier Boutang 1998; Mezzadra 2016). These structural conditions not only shape how WCs operate, but they also influence their possibilities for being safe and genuinely autonomous grassroots spaces where migrant workers can experiment with forms of community and labour organizing and leave criminalizing institutional environments. Where this integration is possible, WCs can, in fact, succeed in extending the outreach of their actions beyond labour disputes to embrace community-oriented actions. The latter may include education, training and community leadership; legal advocacy; struggles against ethnic and gender-based discrimination; and anti-deportation networks (Fine 2006; Kim 2015; Bobo & Casillas 2016). Besides, their less bureaucratic structure, as compared to large trade unions, enables networking with other grassroots groups who are active in the same causes or are spatially located nearby, making space for widespread forms of unionism (Gindin 1995; Fairbrother 2008; Heery et al. 2012). The latter tackle aspects of both labour and social reproduction that traditional channels of unionization fail to comprehensively address as they tend to compartmentalize the migrant condition (Penninx & Roosblad 2001).

Although the notion of WCs in the restricted sense is not widely used by all the previous research we have scrutinized, both academic as well as non-academic sources align in evaluating the outreach and integration of self-organized migrant workers within local communities positively, which is especially achieved in geographic areas where unionizing and collective bargaining are recognized and allowed, such as many OECD countries. In these cases, the literature shows how the workers' actions, whether or not around specific WCs, can be funded through grassroots crowdsourcing, but also through the sponsorship of public

institutions and private partnerships (Jenkins 2002; Roca & Martín-Díaz 2020). An illustration of this phenomenon is the wave of WCs that opened during the 1990s, first in the New York area and then all over the US. Accordingly, WCs legitimized themselves among disenfranchized local communities as non-profit centres and community groups organizing underclass and low-wage workers living in the same neighbourhoods, often with the same ethnic backgrounds and similar employment profiles in specific industries or sectors (Kim 2015).

These functions are especially effective in other contexts where specific migrant communities have been settled and consolidated for several generations, such as in the post-colonial states of Asia and among communities recruited through bilateral programs like Turkish "guest" workers in Germany. In these cases, WCs strive to train migrant community leaders and encourage their upward social mobility through higher education training and programmes by developing high skills and finding more qualified placements in the job market. One example is the 2015–18 Stark Im Beruf (Strong at Work) project activated by the German government with European funds to enhance the employability of migrant women, starting from their daily life (e.g. multilingualism as a prerequisite for cultural mediation activities) (Stark im Beruf n.d.). Another kind of activity directed towards settled migrant women is the Women at the Sidelines(?) project developed in Prague with the support of the Open Society Fund Prague from the Let's Give (Wo)men a Chance programme and financed with Norway Grants (Pavla et al. 2016).

In contexts where unionizing and collective bargaining are illegal or practically obstructed, grassroots actions may be latent or extremely hazardous. Further, economic sectors based on individualized recruitment (i.e. domestic work) are more liable to segregation and isolation of workers in their relation to singular employers and recruitment agents. This dispersing effect is enhanced by migration and visa systems that provide recruiters and employers with great discretion over their employees' fates. The kafala system in the GCC countries represents one of the most striking examples in this respect. The visa scheme binds a migrant of regular status to one single work contract and employer, which discourages unionizing because of the constant threat of illegalization and deportation (De Genova 2013). In these hostile and conflicted settings, WCs can be understood as constellations of place-based actions, groups and solidarity networks for sharing knowledge, skills, tricks of survival, strategies and tactics and possibly actions that support migrants' living and labour conditions (Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2013). For instance, the Jordanian NGO Tamkeen Fields for Aid recommends in its *Invisible Women: The Working and Living Conditions of Irregular Migrant Domestic Workers in Jordan* report (Tamkeen 2015) the implementation of "shelters and safe spaces for migrant domestic workers" where these workers can be assured of psychological and social support, legal advocacy and counselling beyond the repatriation solutions usually provided by embassies' services (ibid.,147).

To achieve these aims, Tamkeen relies on the ILO's managed WC opened in 2013 in the Al- Hassan Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ) in the framework of Better Work Jordan, a joint initiative between the ILO and the International Finance Corporation, with the support of local shareholders and stakeholders (e.g. apparel factories operating in the QIZ and the General Trade Union for Garment and Textile Industries) (ILO 2013a). The centre represents a breakthrough as it became integral to the life of migrant workers who represent 80 percent of the workforce employed in the QIZs (ILO 2014). In particular, the centre mostly serves the women who make up a large portion of workers employed in the garment sector due to the perceived notion that they are less disposed to associate, strike and file complaints about their working conditions (e.g. overworking and poor dormitory conditions) (GAATW 2019, 14). Bethune House in Hong Kong (Hsia 2009) is another example of how places aiming at providing shelter, refuge, solace and support to domestic migrant workers end up serving as political infrastructures for labour organizing and campaigning while recreating communities of mutual aid living in diaspora – that is, as WCs.

Autonomy and cooperation

WCs may decide to maintain higher degrees of autonomy in order to have a strong foundation in place-based, targeted actions that are paramount to consolidate bonds of trust and foster determination in marginalized and impoverished local communities, especially if formed by migrants working precariously in deregulated, low-wage sectors. Further, autonomy is not necessarily a choice but a

Box 6. Bethune House, Hong Kong: From shelter to migrant-led organizing

The Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge was established in 1987 by the Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW) of St John's Anglican Cathedral. Registered as a charitable institution, Bethune House is a shelter for distressed women migrants of any nationality. It provides accommodation, counselling, legal and mediation services and education and training (MFMW n.d.; Hsia 2009). Most of the workers who come to the shelter are domestic workers. The shelter is funded through donations from churches, migrant organizations, service institutions and concerned individuals (*Asia Times* 2018).

Bethune House has, however, been more than a refuge for migrant workers. It has been instrumental in the establishment of other migrant-led organizations (Ford 2019; Worker News 2018). Eight to ten per cent of the workers who received help from Bethune House/MFMW engaged with various migrant organizations (Hsia 2009, 132). United Filipinos in Hong Kong and the Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers (ATKI-HK) are examples of migrant organizations that were established with support from Bethune House. While most migrants would leave MFMW after the settlement of their cases, the workers typically live at the shelter for a longer time. It works as a social centre "where present and past residents can interact and mutually support one another" (MFMW n.d.).

In an interview, Eni Lestari, one of the founders of ATKI-HK and a former client of Bethune House, said, "Bethune House is the second home for many Indonesians. It's also for empowerment. I was sheltered at Bethune House for four to five months. From the shelter, I learnt from the Philippine movement." (Hsia 2009: 131). The empowerment that Eni found during her stay in the shelter has led her to chair the International Migrants Alliance and be invited to speak at the UN Summit 2016 on behalf of immigrants. This suggests the value of the shelter as a local social meeting ground where migrant workers can draw inspiration from each other to fight for their rights on levels beyond the local.

Bethune House has also provided necessary material support for migrant organizations. ATKI-HK, for instance, first set up a hotline in Bethune House, where organizers such as Eni could use the in-house computer to handle the paperwork for lawsuits (Worker News 2018). Material support could be useful for migrant-led organizations, which often lack resources and a physical place for organizing.

necessity in contexts where governments are not prone to support (even if merely formally) freedom of association and collective bargaining. The experience of workers' autonomy has a long historical haul ranging from wildcat strikes to factory and land occupations (Berger 2017). Likewise, WCs exert their autonomy when operating, in contrast to governmental complacency about low-paid work and in violation of international labour standards. This can be observed in the de facto tolerance of seasonal agricultural workers (the vast majority of them are migrants) in areas of intensive agriculture in Southern Europe as the international frameworks and adjustments of value production costs in relation to large-scale distribution and demand have pushed costs and labour conditions downwards as the European Coordination Via Campesina (Indacochea & Bovia 2019) has repeatedly denounced.

Hence, various external conditions inevitably affect the autonomous profile of WC operators and actions. Starting with contexts where unionizing is institutionalized or dependent on government grants and external funding, leaders may often not be rank-and-file community subjects, but rather professional organizers, whilst hostile contexts tend to favour grassroots leadership (Kim 2015). Another potential effect is the co-optation of WCs by larger institutions that can sanction their existence and support their infrastructures, but also end up eroding their value as autonomous spaces for grassroots organizing. In the US, big institutions have either tried or succeeded in co-opting WCs to widen

their membership basis and social legitimacy, as in the case of WC affiliates attending the 2013 AFL-CIO quadrennial convention in Los Angeles (Kim 2015). Besides, "local" unions can strategically be affiliated to bigger national, or even transnational federations, in order to reinforce the legitimacy of their actions and to address GVCs that stretch across different countries. As an implication of this complexity, WCs may be requested to interact with different campaigns and manage different degrees of autonomy in order to pursue multi-scalar goals in sectors such as agriculture, garments and sportswear.

The same evaluation can yield cooperation between local groups acting as WCs, international NGOs and international bodies (the ILO included) that have the advocacy legitimacy to endorse grassroots demands and pressure migrant-origin countries to take action to protect their citizens when they migrate, and migrant-receiving countries to uphold international agreements and binding standards. For example, reporting actions and campaigns were launched by humanitarian NGOs and international bodies like Human Rights Watch, and pro-migration NGOs in European and American borderlands as well as Turkey, to demand the means for survival and labour protection of transitioning migrants and asylum seekers. In general, we argue that the erosion of the WCs' autonomy for grassroots action and empowerment undermines, in turn, their chances for cooperation with their local communities.

Lastly, WCs may operate in groups formed by analogous actors who may have different political agendas regarding the unionism of disenfranchised and vulnerable labourers, especially migrants. During the last few decades, trade unions across the globe have tackled the proliferation of migration systems and regulatory devices meant to diversify and channel migrant labour work force according to just-in-time and point-to-point patterns (Xiang 2008, 2012; Anderson 2010). Further, the association of migratory patterns with a steady sequence of war and financial and climate crises has intensified the salience of migration with regard to domestic and international politics (Castles et al. 2014, 5–6).

Against this backdrop, local trade unions are confronted with the competition between local and migrant labourers and react in two main ways. On the one hand, the channelling of large cohorts of migrant workers into the most vulnerable segments of employment has challenged trade unions to extend their outreach and recruitment beyond their normal spheres of operation and increasingly towards community organizing (Fairbrother & Yates 2003; Holgate 2015). On the other hand, the big trade unions' bureaucratic and organizational structures seem too rigid to integrate the interplays of mobility and settlement (Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2013) determined by migratory patterns and even state-led schemes of recruitment. Therefore, they tend to compartmentalize the migrant workforce as an inherently temporary one and to address migrant labourers mostly as service recipients rather than an organizable membership. This is thus a considerable factor in the decline of traditional unionism in favour of independent and grassroots unionism (Però 2019).

Local communities

Beyond being included in a legally legitimizing framework, WCs can promote and enhance their integration into local communities by participating in consolidated grassroots solidarity networks. They can also create coalitions with pre-existing social movements that mobilize the same communities with respect to the intersectional aspects shaping the inequalities and lack of social justice they experience. In this respect, as the US case displays, urban configurations represent the ideal setting for the development of WCs, whereby they imply a higher concentration of inhabitants and often a clustering of urbanites by class, ethnicity and even labour positioning in certain areas (Fine 2006; Kim 2015). This tendency can also be observed in urban and metropolitan areas in Europe, where the post-Fordist reorganization of urban spaces has led to a concentration of tertiary productive sectors and economies and their corresponding workforces. As this may further residential and class segregation, it also favours the action and autonomy of WCs as understood in broad terms. In Italy, for instance, the pattern of unionization of migrant workers employed in the logistics and transportation sector, followed by the formation of the independent trade union Si-Cobas, exemplifies these opportunities well (Borraccino 2020).

Box 7. The 'migrant only' branches of traditional trade unions in Italy

Traditional trade unions in Europe seem prone to compartmentalize migrant labourers as mainly the recipients of visa-oriented services, instead of conceiving of them as an organizable workforce, and this represents the patterns of exploitation and precarity affecting the global workforce worldwide. Besides, these trade unions advocate for the regularization of undocumented migrants and yet tend not to unionize undocumented migrants. As such, trade unions have institutionalized specific branches whose mission is not to organize migrant workers employed in certain productive sectors but to provide assistance for "migrant-related issues." The three main Italian trade unions – Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoro (CISL) and Unione Italiana del Lavoro (UIL) – have all adopted this model and opened branches only for migrant users, although with different targets. CGIL's INCA infopoints and ANOLF-CISL's branches, for instance, mainly act as visa services providers, while Coordinamento Migranti UIL's mission is to specifically unionize migrant entrepreneurs and highly skilled workers.

These branches provide resources such as visa assistance, legal counselling and proxies for accessing one-time regularizations (such as the *Sanatoria* opened by the Italian government for legalizing undocumented domestic and migrant labourers after the COVID-19 pandemic crisis). On the other hand, grassroots trade unions (*sindacati di base,* e.g. Unione Sindacale di Base, Cobas and S.I. Cobas) are adopting a WC approach, whereby they are increasingly investing in unionizing migrants, forming a larger membership base and training migrant leaders even among undocumented workers. Besides, they frame their action as part of a community-oriented action for social justice and cohesion (Picum 2005). In order to pursue these goals, these unions combine sectorial controversies, strategic alliances with social movements (as described in the case of the industrial conflict over the subcontracted porters working in the Peroni beer main plant in Rome, Italy) and local activism.

On the one hand, subcontracting firms tend to recruit low-skilled, low-wage migrant workers clustered in specific neighbourhoods and informal settlements that are close to the productive sites. On the other hand, this has become an opportunity for workers to unionize and organize beyond the headquarters of the union and the industrial plants in which they work. This has been largely observed in the case of the agrifood and logistics districts of Bologna and Piacenza (Massarelli 2014) and, on a larger scale, in Rome, where many logistics workers live in spaces organized by Housing Rights Movements and/or independent housing squats (Grazioli 2017). During the early months of 2020, this also emerged clearly in the two-month strike in the historic Roman plant of the beer brand Peroni, a traditional Italian company now owned by the Japanese firm Asahi Breweries. The striking porters, employed by a subcontracting firm, were largely Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants (many of whom were holding humanitarian protection visas or refugee status) living together in a close squatted building in Via Collatina and in other housing squats in the nearby areas. The workers, unionized by the independent union Si-Cobas, managed to pursue their goals of adapting their contracts to the national standards for living wages and safety at work after achieving a full turn-out rate of participation in the strike. This was made possible by the fact that the workers used their own dwellings as 'safe spaces' where they planned their union strategies and consolidated their allegiances (Montagna & Grazioli 2019). Besides, their strike, rallies and mobilizations were supported by Housing Rights Movements, local grassroots groups and neighbourhood networks.

Further, the analysis of the literature displays that the detachment from local communities is fostered by some specific features. Firstly, spatial segregation appears to be a relevant factor for the chances of sharing workers' demands with established communities (e.g. agricultural workers' settlements scattered in rural and extra-urban areas of southern Spain or Vietnamese garment compounds where labourers work and live). Besides, community integration can

also be undermined by the intersection of economic motivations and racist and xenophobic sentiments related to controversial migratory processes. For instance, the ethnic discrimination against Central African domestic workers in the GCC countries represents a consolidated pattern in their migratory experience (Kagan 2017; Laiboni 2019). In Southern Europe, the tensions connected to recent migratory transitions and settlements have triggered violent uprisings against agricultural workers in southern Italy as well as xenophobic attacks against NGOs and community centres supporting migrants in Lesbos, Greece (Camilli 2020).

Another obstacle is the degree of informality entrenched in the structure of the economic sectors, which may intensify the competition between migrant workers and native-born ones to access the labour market, contended as an inherently scarce resource. This is a recurring argument in the racist rhetoric against migrant miners in South Africa as well as in the employment of a mostly migrant seasonal workforce in intensive agricultural activities in the Mediterranean area (Kahmann 2002; Indacochea & Bovia 2019). As informality and low local integration interact with loose legislative obligations, they translate into inconsistent degrees of public monitoring and corporate accountability. This aspect is epitomized by the working conditions experienced by workers employed in the garment industries in Asian countries on behalf of established multinational brands. It is important to underline that good practices and wise strategic approaches present in the broader definition of WCs can also find their way into conflicting, non-rural settings and even in contested "borderlands" (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013) segregated from inner areas. Indeed, "working poor" wages, exploitation and spatialized inequalities that are immanent to GVCs of supply and production, as well as to contemporary patterns of migration, call for the activation and mobilization of WCs.

Day labourers WCs (US)

During the last two decades, day labourers have become representative of the concerns arising in connection with the deterioration of labour market conditions in the US. Every morning, more than 100,000 people are hired in almost totally informal ways by construction contractors, landscaping firms, or private families needing renovation works for their homes. These workers are exposed to the most offensive violations of labour rights (underpayment and wage theft, among others) and have become a vivid exemplification of labour casualization. On the one hand, this labour market is the product of the restructuring of the construction industry from the 1980s and after (Theodore 2015). On the other hand, the US construction industry has always been based on outsourcing various basic activities like roofing, plumbing and electric works. The major difference is that before the 1980s, general contractors would hire skilled workers for basic activities and these were chosen in collaboration with trade unions, responsible for setting up training-apprenticeship schemes that would certify the workers' professional skills. As the market competition intensified during the so-called "real-estate boom," the contractors were pressured to cut costs, starting with the simplest and least qualified operations such as landscaping and moving.

The use of an informally hired and poorly paid labour force, chosen among undocumented populations and newly arrived Latino migrants to be employed on a daily basis, has represented one of the most visible changes in the construction industry as well as in US cityscapes. The recruitment of this workforce may happen on the streets as well as behind closed doors through the intermediation offered by second-rank temporary staff agencies (TSAs), often located in the so-called "dispatch rooms", i.e. non-office spaces such as garages and warehouses. The customers of these dispatch-rooms are usually non-union contractors seeking an appearance of formality in the hiring of daily labourers (Mehta & Theodore 2002; Peck & Theodore 2007). The latter, mostly migrants, can be seen reaching TSA spots before sunrise and wait to be summoned by the dispatch rooms' managers, who sort the "candidate" workers according to various criteria. Theodore et al. (2006) classified the TSAs' venues into three distinct categories:

- Connected places that are related to the construction industry (e.g. construction sites, parking lots, refurbishment shops) where workers gather as they are more likely to find a recruiter
- Unconnected places (e.g. large urban roads or open squares) which historically had a transit and meeting function in

cities, and therefore allowed recruitment to be exercised without clamour

- The regulated places where second-level TSAs or independent workers centres mediate labour demand and supply; the latter indeed represent a relevant turning point for day labourers' struggles.

The beginning of the visibility of migrant workers' gatherings on the streets dates back to the 1980s, and it relates to a growing anti-migration discourse spread in the neighbourhoods where the gatherings would take place. A number of municipal ordinances were deployed in US cities to police undocumented labourers looking for jobs outdoors as they were accused of littering (Varsanyi 2008). One famous case of urban conflict derived from the presence of day labourers was the application of a late 1980s anti-solicitation law that was voted in by the Municipality of Redondo Beach (Narro 2006). The law, first approved in 1987, was designed to prevent the solicitation of cars and motorcycles on city streets and highways. Since 2004, the municipality began to apply the law through the use of undercover police officers, who would patrol and identify migrants in order to prevent gatherings. Migrants were often charged fines, and sometimes arrested if they were undocumented or after their reaction to the police operations. As the cases multiplied, a legal advocacy NGO, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, in cooperation with the National Day Laborers Organization Network (NDLON), offered assistance to the migrants and helped them file appeals in court.

One relevant achievement was the discussion of a great deal of cases during the same day, while the activists organized a rally that gave great visibility to the issue, shedding light on the systematic discrimination perpetrated on the grounds of the ordinance. Later on, in 2004, a federal district court judged the Redondo Beach anti-day labourer solicitation ordinance as unconstitutional. This campaign increased NDLON's credibility to the point that, in 2006, it signed an agreement with the biggest and most representative US union, the AFL-CIO. The content of this agreement is often represented as a best practice by those who advocate for an organic alliance between unions and WCs (Fine et al. 2008). In exchange for a more proactive attitude to migration legislation, the NDLON offered to constitute hiring halls managed together by NDLON and the union, which should have been more open to the unskilled labour force represented by the WCs.

During the 2000s, one of the effects of the success of the organizing campaign in defence of day labourers was the diffusion of local WCs dedicated to them. During those years, WCs gained a foothold as community structures of solidarity and as a self-managed mode of regulating informal economies to the workers' advantage. Regarding the first point, the network of WCs for day labourers that were engaged in activities such as legal support and education resonates with the experience of already established WCs. For instance, most WCs are concerned with checking the regularity of payments, providing English language services and organizing professional training for day labourers who have been unemployed for a long period of time (Chauvin 2015). Besides, WCs for day labourers are engaged with bargaining prices for the workforce. Nevertheless, the quantitative impact of this last stream of action is difficult to gauge, as qualitative studies (Gordon 2005; Johnson 2013) have questioned the purview of the improvement of job conditions and their correspondence with the migrant workers' expectations. On the other hand, large surveys (such as the one conducted by Melendez et al. 2014) assessed that the day labourers hired through WCs earned higher wages than those recruited via other channels (e.g. TSAs).

The reason underpinning this incongruence may be the fact that WCs are successful in negotiating floor payments under which no one is allowed to accept a contract, even though the amount is affected by the lack of qualifications of day labourers (Chauvin 2015). Another controversial point that attracted strong criticism from the rank-and-file wings of the movement was the fact that some day labourers' WCs would cooperate with local municipalities to remove day labourers from public spaces (Herrera 2010). These issues resonate with the tensions towards the advocacy and intermediation functions of WCs in favour of a return to the grassroots organizing principles of WCs. In sum, since many day labourers live in the same communities where they look for jobs, they see WCs as not merely job-seeking tools but as community instruments aimed at

improving the daily life of their communities. In fact, data sets from Visser's et al. (2017) also confirm that that better results concerning economic rights for users of WCs are related to a better citizenship status made up of indicators such as social capital, English language knowledge and healthcare access. This aspect is promising for WCs' chance to be not only a tool of labour market-related advocacy but a tool of communitarian social integration.

5. Good practices

The search for generalizable "good practices" in WCs is always a paradoxical aim because every experience is strongly embedded in a particular context. Historical aspects, political constraints and the features of every labour market and migration regime oblige us to be careful before reaching a conclusion of what is good or successful. Good or successful practices are always related to such specific conditions. Single cases also have ups and downs, and so the narrative of a good practice tends to only highlight its most glowing and positive aspects without necessarily attempting a sensible balance or assessment. Many hardships, inequalities and oppressions, both in everyday life and in society at large, may remain regardless of the outstanding improvements gained by specific workers' struggles.

However, learning from others' experiences might be inspiring for practitioners somewhere else. Even new members of a WC may use these accounts as a valuable memory of major past achievements. In addition to being knowledge needed for future court trials, the lessons from prior struggles are an essential component of the education and training of activists. Broader coalitions, both nationally and internationally, can be also established according to the reports of good practices, although they only present a superficial entry point to a case. Hence, in order to avoid the vagueness and de-contextualization of the notion of 'good practice,' in this section, we will focus on the in-depth description of several cases where advocacy and organizing strategies can be identified as relatively successful attempts despite the difficult and structural circumstances that migrant and other vulnerable workers always face.

This section examines WCs' "good practices" across different world regions by dividing them into four types for analytical purposes that have been insufficiently developed by extant literature (Bobo & Casillas 2016): place-based mobilizations, regional coalitions, transnational campaigns and online activism. Remarkably, the relations between spatial scales and manifold tactics of struggle are illuminated by the constellations of agents and actions pursuing the improvement of migrant, disenfranchised workers' living and labour conditions.

Place-based mobilization

WCs need to modulate and define their fields of actions according to the different circumstances that condition their methodology of advocacy and mobilization. First of all, they need to engage with the intersectional features of the inequalities experienced by migrant workers in the settings where they live and work. Secondly, the political, labour and migration regimes that immediately surround WCs are crucial in defining the strategies and coalitions they can deploy. In our view, these two sets of contexts both constrain and enable the WCs' autonomous agency – that is, their possibilities for collective bargaining, grassroots organizing and multilevel challenges to legal and institutional obstacles.

In light of these assumptions, the primary good practice that makes WCs effective in empowering migrant workers' rights and living conditions is their engagement in place-based collective actions. As shown by the example of Territorio Doméstico in Madrid (see case study 1), a focus on the community allows WCs to interact with other activist groups on a regular basis to initiate spin-off projects, and to experiment with various forms of organization, campaigning, unionizing and "autonomous self-help" in which service provision does not take the lead.

Regarding contexts where collective bargaining and unionizing are legal, there is extensive literature (Bobo & Casillas 2016; Fine 2006; Kim 2015) confirming the priority of place-based programmes and activities that are peculiar to WCs and also hold commonalities with the key features of social movement unionism (Fairbrother 2008; Gindin 2016):

1. to organize collective actions that address workplace problems demanding the enforcement of extant laws as well as progressive policy improvements;
2. to offer worker rights education and outreach;
3. to train rank-and-file leaders;

4. to develop democratic structures of participation;
5. to promote community-oriented activities which encompass intersectionality in their action beyond labour-based advocacy;
6. to establish coalitions and cooperation with other non-state stakeholders (i.e. trade unions, associations, social movements and NGOs).

Accordingly, this approach entails building power and organizing for social change starting from local communities' problems such as education, marginalization and meeting the basic needs of food and shelter. Labour struggles are also closely associated with broader political campaigns that challenge racism and migration management and policies (Bobo & Casillas 2016). The scope and reach of alliances and coalition building throughout their communities and beyond (Fairbrother 2008) would lead WCs to embrace emancipatory politics (Gindin 2016).

The "social movements phase" (Bobo & Casillas 2016) implies a horizontal connection of WCs with grassroots movements as this has been widely documented in academic as well as non-academic literature. For instance, the reports filed by NGOs about migrant workers and local social movements in Southern Europe illustrate the positive impacts engendered by grassroots social movements in providing shelter and preventing housing segregation and vulnerability while highlighting how the lack of solidarity networks and institutional support exposes migrant workers and relatives to violence, trafficking, abuse, exploitation and mental as well as physical diseases (Dadusc & Mudu 2020). These risks are presented in several reports such as those by Medicins Sans Frontiers about migrants and refugees in Italy (MSF 2016, 2018), Spain (Migreurop 2012) and the Mediterranean area at large (ECVC 2019; FRA 2017).

Case Study 1: Territorio Doméstico (Madrid, Spain)

Territorio Doméstico (TD) is an organization of domestic workers that was born in 2006 in the city of Madrid, that aimed to make their work visible and to take care of each other: "We are a space for social encounters, relations, care and struggle of women, mostly migrants, for our rights" (Draper 2018, 177). The first physical space where they started to meet and organize was the formerly squatted autonomous social centre Eskalera Karakola, which is located in the urban centre of Madrid. This social centre was run by women and LGBTIQ+ people and had been engaged in several campaigns to support sex workers and precarious female workers, especially during general strikes (Precarias 2004). In the same city, other squatted social centres welcomed migrants and helped them with many reproductive, daily life and legal needs, but a focus on their working conditions was less frequent (Arribas 2012, Martínez 2017). All over Europe, squatted social centres and buildings for housing purposes became safe spaces for migrants, especially in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe after the 2015 "refugee crisis" (Dadusc et al. 2019; García & Jørgensen 2019; Mudu & Chattopadhay 2017). Most of these squats focused on solidarity, struggles against the incarceration and the deportation of migrants, and housing needs – that is to say, on their reproductive conditions and political demands more than on their specific labour situation. Nonetheless, this network of autonomous and safe spaces functioned as "shadow WCs" for migrant workers, and some even developed a genuine double nature as both WCs and countercultural social centres. Eskalera Karakola in Madrid, by hosting and promoting TD, was one of them.

First of all, the relationship of TD with the former squat was a "coalition" for sharing the space and struggle. The autonomous feminism that native-born and foreign-born activists were developing facilitated Eskalera Karakola to become both a meeting and safe space for domestic migrant workers. In addition, their mutual aid practices helped shape a distinctive political discourse of dignity, autonomy and horizontality that singled out the identity of TD. In particular, they reframed the notion of care in order to enhance the social value of working in the care sector and as a political tool to keep women together while struggling for their rights (Draper 2018, 177–178). They professionally take care of others but also of themselves, politically, as an activist collective. They claim the rights of care workers and also the social recognition of the value that caring entails. They train domestic workers with their own means and demand that knowledge about caring should be part of the curriculum in schools. This rationale led them to promote the social visibility of domestic work and its mostly female migrant practitioners by showcasing both the

violent conditions in which that work is carried out and the autonomous agency and skills of these workers. "Because the world doesn't move without us", "They wanted arms but people came" and "Slavery is over" were their ground-breaking slogans, which they still use today.

Equipped with this discourse, TD empowers women by performing horizontal "self-help" rather than service provision. This means that they provide advice within their assemblies, but they also demand involvement in the whole process of organizing, demonstrating, lobbying and, if it is the case, filing reports against employers. Many of their members are undocumented migrants, who have gone through experiences of being beaten and sexually harassed, suddenly being expelled from their homes/workplaces, etc. Hence, court cases are especially difficult for them. However, "Territorio has won more than sixteen trials [by 2015] . . . Recently, there have also been two cases of trials initiated by Moroccan women who worked as bar attendants and were not paid by the owners. In another case, a Moroccan comrade was working as a live-in domestic worker and was thrown out of the house" (Draper & Pimentel 2020). Thus, TD encourages migrant women to speak out and go public. In doing so, TD provides legal assistance and, not the least, a support network: "It is very complicated to file a complaint if you do not have support networks. Without papers, alone." Therefore, the support of the collective is important because the Moroccan woman was being threatened: "'You don't have papers and you're not from this country,' they would say to her. But each time there is a complaint, there is support. She told her boss: 'Señora, even though I don't have papers, I have rights.'" (Draper & Pimentel 2020). This mutual support is also done on the phone due to the scarce time that live-in domestic workers have available. Moreover, the activist lawyer who supports them holds an open office once a week at Eskalera Karakola.

The space provided by the social centre was not exclusively hosting TD, but it was an already established spatial infrastructure that served as a crucial platform for starting their advocacy and organizing activities. It also provided the opportunity to be engaged with feminist activists who supported these activities, with an initial demonstration in 2008. This first march used a specific tactic aiming at integrating those migrant domestic workers who were unable to attend: "When we held the first protest, in 2008, when we went out onto the streets, there were a lot of *compañeras* who worked for two months to organize the protest, but many *compañeras* could not go. . . There was a very intense issue of the police asking for papers on the street. Then someone had the idea of putting on wigs, since many *compañeras* could not participate in the protest; however they stood on the sidewalk, watching and wearing their wigs, because they could not participate . . . because of fear" (Draper & Pimentel 2020). Following this creative way of inclusion in their protests and campaigns, they also organized theatrical performances, radio programmes, the production and recording of a music album, fashion shows and flash mobs (Jüssen 2017, 281-283). They are often invited to talk at universities and other academic, activist and labour events despite their feeling of exclusion from the male-dominated trade unions and the white liberal feminist scene (Santamarina & Cabezas 2019, 199–200).

An important landmark of their development was to establish a non-profit organization (Senda de Cuidados) that served as a "fair-trade" mediating agency to sign domestic care contracts according to decent conditions. This association was set up in 2014 and enjoyed the space of another social centre run by a militant bookshop (Traficantes de Sueños), located in the same neighbourhood as Eskalera Karakola. Many of the training needs of TD members are now channelled through Senda de Cuidados by encompassing many other, including male, affiliates, activists and qualified professionals (Draper 2018, 180). Hence, they manage to organize or attend training workshops and subsidize fees and transport expenses for the members who cannot afford them. Senda de Cuidados also runs crowdfunding initiatives, collects members' dues and donations, and cooperates with other organizations (at least on one occasion, they joined a municipal programme, Mares, over the last few years). Another pillar of their network coalitions is the activist-research collective Observatorio Jeanneth Beltrán sobre Derechos en Empleo de Hogar y de Cuidados (Jeanneth Beltrán Observatory about the Rights for Domestic and Care Work), which helps with legal aid and documents as well as provides support for political campaigning. During the 2011 mobilizations and occupations of central squares (the 15M movement), TD participated in the feminist working group which led to the Care

Women Strikes in 2012 and 2013 (Jüssen 2017, 281; Santamarina & Cabezas 2019, 200). Later on, TD was involved in anti-racist coalitions and demonstrations (Santamarina & Cabezas 2019, 200).

In terms of organizing, TD does not only report individual cases of abuse, violence, illegal contracts, discrimination and firing, but also joins other groups to change the legislation for domestic work, healthcare and residence permits for migrants. In particular, at the invitation of the political party Podemos in 2015, TD, Senda de Cuidados and the Grupo Turín went together to talk to the European Parliament, where they demanded the ratification of Convention No. 189, which would force Spain to ensure the right to organization and dignity for domestic workers. This prompted them to engage in the international sphere: "The Spanish government should have approved that convention more than eight years ago. It did not do so ... we began organizing with other collectives and started a campaign to ratify the convention 189. Then we started holding press conferences, making videos, doing interviews. Later we circulated a petition and gathered over 100,000 signatures. We have carried out an important campaign in the media. It is the common goal of all the collectives of household workers ... We are very prepared in the sense that we do not want them to only approve the agreement with a photo and a signature. We want it to be approved and implemented! This is the demand that unites us on the national and international level because all of the collectives want it and we are demanding it. We are increasingly uniting with others across the world" (Draper & Pimentel 2020). Despite the favourable attitude of the Spanish government to ratify Convention No. 189, TD still had to stage protests in order to urge them to do so even during the 2020 state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic (López 2020).

Although some minor reforms have been implemented in the Spanish legislation, domestic workers do not enjoy the same general conditions as other workers (in terms of minimum wage, working time, paid holidays, unemployment and retirement benefits, etc.), they cannot participate in collective bargaining, and around 32 per cent of them (186,000 out of 580,000) do not contribute to the Social Security due to employers' fraud (https://expinterweb.mitramiss.gob.es/series/). In this regard, TD cooperates with other migrant and feminist organizations who demand legislative changes to grant equality in working conditions for domestic workers (Jüssen 2017, 280). As a consequence, it is worth noting that there have been other WCs for domestic migrant workers dispersed around the metropolitan area of Madrid (Jüssen 2017, 280, 284) although the resilience, innovation, public reach, social movement coalitions, neighbourhood attachment and achievements in terms of rights at work by TD represent outstanding gains within that context.

Regional coalitions

Place-based actions often need to scale up in order to tackle wider GVCs that may operate in contexts where the political and legal spaces for institutionalized advocacy and unionizing are narrowed down, if not fully ruled out. Besides, transnational production and supply chains require WCs to mobilize different strategies, activate international networks, coordinate multi-stakeholders initiatives and different place-based groups worldwide in order to pursue fundamental rights such as adequate living wages and labour standards. This implies combining not only multi-scalar geographies, but also diverse labour laws, migratory regulations, economic sectors and political regimes. In these cases, WCs may opt to create national and world campaigns that align towards the same goals. As it is sometimes documented (see case study 2), they can replicate the tactics of wildcat strikes, as known by the long-lasting background of trade unionism, in a "viral" modality.

Other WCs may find vertical scaling up more effective than horizontal strategies, especially in sectors where collective bargaining is prevented by hostile environments with regards to both the institutional regulations and the spatial constraints of workplaces as often experienced by domestic workers. In these circumstances, the attempt to change the recruiters' and employers' mindsets while demanding formalized labour laws and cogent systems of corporate accountability may make a difference to improving migrant workers' living conditions at different stages of their migratory and labour trajectories. One example of this strategic approach is represented by the series of actions implemented by the Migrant Rights Group operating in Qatar, which are primarily aimed at incentivizing employers (either private households or firms) to enter the legal economy or adopt "high recruitment standards". Along

the same lines, WCs may experiment with forms of collaboration with ethical or fair-trade recruitment companies (such as Senda de Cuidados promoted by TD) that intend to match workers and employees under secure working conditions, and therefore prevent abuse and trafficking from the beginning of the migratory journey. However, WCs should pay attention to building the workers' voices and capacity of bargaining even within existing recruitment processes in order to further promote the culture and practice of secure working conditions in a comprehensive way that includes migration, health and living conditions, and rights beyond labour regulations.

For instance, these aspects and limitations were also underlined in the independent evaluation of the ILO's Work in Freedom project as it unfolded in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Jordan and Lebanon. In particular, the report highlights the achievement of the engagement of 600 recruiters to "identify and pilot better recruitment practices" (ILO 2019a, 2) alongside policy ameliorations for domestic work and anti-trafficking laws and regulations (ibid.). On the other hand, the same report also concluded that fair recruitment practices alone are not a barrier against trafficking and labour exploitation. In fact, domestic recruiters may not be interested in disrupting existing power "balances" and competition mechanisms that make the workforce cheap. Besides, the scarcity of decent work offers, even within fair recruitment practices, often results in substandard employment and living conditions (ibid., 31) that need to be tackled through policy changes as well as through collective association and bargaining power. Hence, when both vertical and horizontal strategies scale up to transnational levels, WCs have shown the necessity of developing broad connections in order to effectively pursue their demands and goals. In this respect, federations of unions and associations appear to be convenient vehicles for coordinating these efforts. Transnational unions set up regional offices and branches that coordinate campaigns, networking and actions in solidarity among different affiliates, starting from regional nodes. This is, for example, the structure of the IndustriALL Federation, whose regional headquarters are in Johannesburg, New Delhi, Singapore, Moscow and Montevideo. These nodes are meant to coordinate sectoral campaigns and to lead the establishment of Guidelines for Global Framework Agreements (GFAs) with companies that are willing to comply with ILO Conventions (Mustill 2013).

Case study 2: Campaigns for the dignity of migrant domestic workers (GCC countries and Central Africa)

One relevant case of WCs' concerted advocacy consisted of regional actions that converged towards the improvement of the life and work environments of women migrant domestic workers in the GCC countries. In the Gulf countries, the kafala system provides sponsors in the country of destination (typically the employers) with an inordinate amount of power over the worker. At the same time, the legal protections against abuse are limited and hard to apply in practice. Hence the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) and the Committee on the Application of Standards of the ILC as well as the international trade union movement and international NGOs such as Human Rights Watch have repeatedly recommended a substantial reform of the kafala and associated labour laws.

Besides, significant attempts to improve labour mobility and dismantle sponsorship systems, even for migrant workers, have been promoted during the past few years, like the examples documented in the ILO's white paper on internal labour market mobility and fair migration (ILO 2017b). They include policy changes that came into force in Qatar and Saudi Arabia between 2015 and 2016, and that pertain to the erasure of the terminology "sponsorship" (Qatar) or some additions in the circumstances allowed for workers to switch employers even without the permission of the current employer/sponsor (Saudi Arabia) (ibid., 12–13). In Qatar, the ITUC and Global Union Federations such as Building and Wood Worker's International, International Domestic Workers Federation, International Transport Workers' Federation and UNI have been playing a crucial role in supporting the ILO and the Qatar Government in the labour reform agenda including the dismantlement of the kafala and the establishment of joint committees at the enterprise level. Nevertheless, the persisting imbalance between wage value in Asian countries (for example, in the Philippines, India and Pakistan) and their value in the GCC countries propels a downward pressure in labour conditions and a widespread tolerance towards abuse. Hence, the migratory experience is highly

individualized and non-skilled workers employed in local households as maids, caregivers, babysitters and so on are isolated from each other and constantly subjected to forced labour under the pressure of the blackmailing of becoming illegal and being deported. Besides, employment conditions also depend upon the relation established between employers and employees, and the presence of discriminatory class, ethnic, gendered and cultural notions that may underpin it. The latter stand out especially when they intersect with societal changes that affect some specific segments of paid and unpaid labour like in the case of the changing structure of gendered care work assignments in Lebanon. For instance, the ILO's "Intertwined" (ILO 2016), an in-depth survey about the habits and beliefs of Lebanese employers of migrant domestic workers, yields evidence that the preference of high-income employers for live-in employees (rather than freelancers) is driven by the notion that this type of employment is cheaper, reduces negative external influences and distractions, and is more practical for the schedules of households with working women who bear constant childcare and elderly nursing duties (ibid., 10). Against this backdrop, many interviewees maintained the belief that practices such as the retention of workers' documents and lock-ins are legitimate, whilst they display little knowledge even of the few protections that standard contracts and the kafala system stipulate (ibid., 40).

If international monitoring is formally tolerated, grassroots organizing and unionizing are still proactively discouraged, if not technically illegal and potentially prosecuted. One example in this respect is the case of the attempt of migrant domestic workers based in Lebanon to form a union in 2014, challenging the law which allows migrants to join an union yet not lead one (O' Regan 2017). Later a splinter group named the Alliance of Migrant Domestic Workers was founded with the support of the Migrant Community Centre (MCC). Established by the Anti-Racism Movement in Beirut in 2011, the MCC runs several dynamic WCs that configure free and safe spaces for migrant workers employed in Lebanon, including domestic ones (ILO 2015). Hence, it has been cooperating in consolidating the Alliance's constituency and rank-and-file leadership, whereby it offers to its membership activist training and language proficiency. Besides, it also offers advocacy and miscellaneous community services (e.g. childcare and educational activities) (ILO 2015; O' Regan 2017).

As conflicted institutional environments, civic societies that are not dynamic, and poor pluralistic political traditions may jeopardize the freedom of association and the capacity to open facilities directed towards migrant labourers, WC constellations, including NGOs operating in the GCC area, may engage with sets of actions that aim to eradicate discriminatory notions and practices entrenched in recruitment and employment processes while paying attention to not conduct polarizing campaigns that may further deteriorate migrant workers' living conditions and stir xenophobic attention. These programmes often point to educating both recruiters and employees in perceiving homes as workplaces and domestic workers as employees deserving fair pay and labour rights.

This approach is exemplified by the three core initiatives led by the Migrant Rights Group operating in the GCC:

1. Domestic Workers Advocacy aims at educating employer families about the benefits of respecting the rights of their domestic workers.
2. Business Outreach offers sub-contracting facilities management in order to help large businesses uphold their "high recruitment standards" even when it comes down to subcontracted workers (i.e. domestic workers), so that by paying attention to the tendering process and putting small measures in place after awarding the contract, an organization can minimize the exploitation of contracted staff.
3. Lastly, Ensaniyat is a project with a two-fold mission; the first is looking at facilities management contracting in Qatar and the responsibility of businesses in ensuring that contracted staff are hired and employed in an ethical manner; the second part of the project works with students in Qatar and Kuwait on changing perceptions of domestic workers in the region (Migrant-Rights.org, n.d.).

In general, these projects are designed to incentivize employers (whether private households or firms) to enter the legal economy.

These NGOs also cooperate with "ethical recruitment companies" (i.e. the Fair Pairing

Initiative based in the Philippines and FSI Worldwide) in order to match workers and employees under fair and secure working conditions. Lastly, migrant workers establish informal networks (if not unions) and associations that link them to their families by using instant messaging apps and web technologies that allow them to be in touch and also ask for help. In general, NGOs and unions converge in recommending a deep and substantial reform of the kafala system and also the implementation of shelters and safe spaces for migrant domestic workers, equivalent to WCs, where migrant workers can receive psychological and social support, legal advocacy and counselling beyond the repatriation solutions usually provided by embassies. This is, for instance, Point C in the policy recommendations made by the Jordanian NGO Tamkeen Fields for Aid at the end of the report *Invisible Women: The Working and Living Conditions of Irregular Migrant Domestic Workers in Jordan*, published with the support of the Open Society Foundation (Tamkeen 2015,147).

As for the regional campaigns activated in migrant workers' countries of origin, Central African NGOs joined forces in urging national governments to define binding protocols with GCC countries where the kafala system rules, in order to protect the citizens employed in the domestic and construction sectors. A specific illustration of this multilevel approach is the 2018 ITUC-Africa report (Atong et al. 2018) about the conditions of Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda workers employed in the GCC states, which suggests that WCs in countries of origin and destination should cooperate in synergy with other non-state stakeholders, trade unions, and NGOs in order to promote fair recruitment practices, leverage advocacy and media campaigns about African migrant workers in the GCC-UAE area, curtail human trafficking and lobby governments to upgrade existing bilateral agreements (Atong et al. 2018, 65-67).

Transnational campaigns

As WCs grow, "toolkits" directed towards trade unions and grassroots groups become useful instruments for disseminating and sharing knowledge, homogenizing actions and consolidating local advancements in worker rights on wider scales through the creation of peer-to-peer networks and multi-scale coalitions. As this practice characterizes productive sectors that are multi-scaled in nature such as the agricultural one (Anderson et al. 2019), it has recently come to also define the action of trade unions and other actors in the constellation of WCs whose "traditional" sets of actions are more controversial, yet inadequate to tackle the complexities of current GSCs and the composition of an increasing globalized, migrant workforce across the globe. Hence, transnational campaigns and coalitions are increasingly flanking declining forms of traditional unionism and place-based social movements unionism (Fairbrother 2008; Gindin 2016), serving to either circumvent or internationalize local controversies.

For instance, the above strategies are manifest in the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) (2008) guide and the IndustriALL guidelines for GFAs involving multilevel stakeholders, as in the ones stipulated by the union federation IndustriALL with multinational companies active in sectors like oil (e.g. Enel and Lukoil), clothing (e.g. H&M) and IT (e.g. Asos) industries (IndustriALL 2014). Once stipulated, GFAs represent transnationally fungible tools. In MENA and Asian countries, WCs can orchestrate cross-national campaigns for living wages that take into account the global structure of the productive sectors they tackle. By the same token, the elaboration of multilevel sets of goals and demands appears to be an effective WC strategy for obtaining living wages while retaining tools to make single states and firms accountable for upholding established standards and legal provisions. These demands are enhanced by taking into account the intersectionality of migrants' experience. Within this framework, WCs can also waive multilevel welfare policies that effectively address the different dimensions of inequality instead of framing migrants through more vague categories such as "difference", "integration" and "assimilation" (Smetáčková 2015). Indeed border management and labour laws are strictly interwoven. Hence, migration is modulated in order to channel mobility towards the demands for a certain kind of workforce pertaining to specific labour segments (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013; Castles et al. 2014).

Case study 3: The struggle for garment workers' living wage (Asia)

The trade unions' guidelines compiled by ITGLWF (2008) for the occasion of the World Day for

Decent Work have the mission of providing trade unions across the world with organizational tools for increasing their bargaining power towards brand contractors and retailers. Indeed, the latter are responsible for developing codes of conduct and implementing internal policies that could leverage manufacturers at the bottom of the supply chain to guarantee living wages and work conditions that are at least consistent with the standards demanded in the countries where the products are sold. Further, the report highlights that collective bargaining should be supported by the formalized right to unionize and negotiate nationally, regionally and at the factory level (ITGLWF 2008, 10).

In 2008, the CCC and the Play Fair 2008 Campaign took advantage of the global visibility of the Beijing Olympics to publicly expose the findings of fieldwork research, workshops and reports concerned with the poor working conditions applied by sportswear brands that placed themselves in the "brand-conscious" segment of the clothing market (Maquila Solidarity Network 2008). The report collected over 300 interviews with workers employed in Chinese, Indian, Indonesian and Thai factories about their wages, experiences and working conditions. Besides, it also includes testimonies by migrant workers in Shenzhen (China) and the accounts of the hazardous labour and wage conditions experienced by migrant female labourers who form a large part of the industry's workforce, often working in-house without adequate dormitory accommodations while being subjected to constant pressures to produce, disciplinary practices, and physical and verbal abuse. Further, the report highlights that the adoption of codes of conduct by corporations does not equal fair employment practices. Speaking of the Yue Yuen (Vietnam) business model, the same investigation highlights that "numerous reports by NGOs and labour activists have revealed widespread workers' rights violations at Yue Yuen modelled factories. Most of the allegations concerned abusive treatment of workers (associated with a militaristic style of management), sexual harassment, forced and excessive overtime, low wages (in many cases, less than the national minimum wage), poor safety standards, unjust employment contracts, limited access to toilets, and repression of (independent) unions" (Maquila Solidarity Network 2008: 37). These remarks bring forward the fact that a collaborative approach with employers chosen by NGOs is important and requires WCs to maintain a direct relationship with workers in order to remain vigilant about the actual upholding of the targets, laws and standards formally established to improve labour conditions, especially when migrant workers can be threatened and abused on the grounds of their economic precariousness and migratory status.

These conclusive remarks resonate with the underpinnings of the Asian Floor Wage (AFWA) campaign (Merk 2009) which aims at achieving a living wage threshold for labourers employed in garment and textiles GSCs. The report describing the campaign proceedings starts from an assessment of the implications of the garment sector's global production and supply chain in wage defaulting and undermining the unionizing changes of workers, under extreme working conditions, and put in mutual competition through corporate strategies of divide and conquer. Overworking, abusive working environments and poverty wages are indicated as the common patterns of the garment industry. These conditions are inconsistent with the ILO's recommendations for generalizing living wages and collective bargaining rights (ILO 2008a), but also with the brands' self-advertisements as "conscious" and ethically committed ones.

According to Merk (2009), this mismatch depends on the loss of corporate accountability across complex GVCs where local suppliers compete for the cheaper commodities and labour costs. Against this backdrop, the report outlines a proposal for an AFWA alliance that points to lifting salaries in the industry to living wages based on three strategic pillars:

1. building a regional and transnational collective bargaining strategy against capital mobility;
2. promoting a wage-led growth and economic development scenario;
3. pushing for a redistributive corporate accountability agenda.

Besides, the report outlines the formula of purchasing power parity that allows us to calculate living wages according to each country's currency, food rates and so on (Merk 2009). These actions combine place-based action and broad transnational networking by supplying specific analytical tools that allow

migrant workers to challenge corporate and governmental narratives and figures.

The recommendations and the strategies elaborated by the AFWA campaign are based on the evidence that transnational campaigns prove particularly effective in supporting local-based controversies with global firms that do not abide by their obligations to local labourers. This is, for instance, the case of the #PayUpUniqlo campaign, which the CCC activated after being summoned urgently "for support from the local level Indonesian union FMPSI, after the Jaba Garmindo factory in Tangerang, Jakarta Indonesia, went bankrupt in 2015. Only months earlier, the Japanese brand Uniqlo had pulled all its orders and the workers were left without the severance payments they were owed" (Clean Clothes campaign n.d.). The place-based controversy was brought forward by "a coalition of workers, unions, labour groups, migrant organizations and feminists" (Clean Clothes campaign n.d.) who joined forces to hold the international contractor accountable for the local suppliers following Indonesian labour law that, according to the campaigners, set the total amount due to the severed workers to US$5.5 million. This was considered a landmark case, for part of the strategy was to convince some of Uniqlo's closest multinational competitors (e.g. Nike, Disney, H&M, and Walmart) to agree to cover the severance claims in case local suppliers went bankrupt, and to implement check mechanisms to ensure their supply chain partners across GVCs abide by compensation standards under Indonesian law.

Transnational campaigns, corporate accountability across GVCs and brands' reputations were the three strategic pillars for the WCs constellations that converged after the Rana Plaza building collapse in the Dhaka district of Savar Upazila in April 2013, which brought global attention to the working conditions endured by garment workers employed on behalf of multinational, well-established firms. As the death toll was officially fixed at 1,134 and the number of injured workers to nearly 2,600, the CCC joined forces with IndustriALL to track down the international brands that outsourced to local Bangladeshi suppliers producing inside Rana Plaza. This step was preliminary to a transnational campaign that targeted the international contractors as complicit participants in the creation of that hazardous working environment. This denouncement was crucial for two milestones in Bangladeshi garment sector history. First, the independent legally binding Accord on Fire and Safety Agreement was signed by over 200 brands and local Bangladeshi as well as transnational trade unions (i.e. IndustriALL and UNI Global Union) and witness signatories in 2013 and then updated in 2018. The landmark accord "covers factories producing Ready-Made Garments (RMG) and at the option of signatory companies, home textiles and fabric & knit accessories" (Accord on Fire and Building Safety on Fire in Bangladesh 2013, 2017).

The second achievement was the Rana Plaza agreement for compensation to those who suffered losses in the Rana Plaza disaster. The agreement stemmed from a meeting hosted in September 2013 at the ILO's Geneva headquarters, which was attended by representatives of Bangladeshi trade unions and government, brands and retailers and international NGOs, who agreed to work towards a compensation agreement in line with the Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 (No. 121) (ILO 1964[1980]). Over the next two years, the ILO chaired the committee which negotiated the terms and the practical steps for compensating the beneficiaries of the scheme. By October 2015, payments to the beneficiaries of the scheme were complete. In total, the Rana Plaza Donor Trust Fund set up by the ILO collected contributions from international clothing brands, the Bangladesh Prime Minister's Fund and other small donors to pay out operational costs and over US$30 million to the families of the deceased and to workers injured in the collapse, alongside the ongoing provision for medical care for the seriously and moderately injured (Rana Plaza Arrangement n.d.).

As the Rana Plaza case effectively illustrates, substantial goals are achieved as long as campaigns succeed in tackling all the scales of the GSCs of interest. In the case of the garment sector, this implicates being able to have an impact on the "ending meet" of the retail sector, where the leverage of boycott and reputational damages are centrally at stake. For instance, the UK Labour Behind the Label had the mission to support the AFWA campaign for living wages in the textile and garment industry (McMullen & Maher 2011). The state of pay behind the UK high street to socialize a UK audience to the outreach of the alliance between UK trade unions and Asian workers' movements was waived by the AFWA campaign. Besides, the report illustrates

the actions taken by Labour Behind the Label in the UK, especially in terms of the lobbying and cooperation with fashion brands and retailers (i.e. the elaboration of a "grading scale" for indexing where brands and retailers stand in relation to the campaigners' demands).

Online activism

In a globalized and highly IT connected world characterized by GVCs, it is undeniable that online communication tools play a paramount function in connecting and echoing grassroots demands across a plugged planet. Hence, WCs increasingly incentivize digital media literacy among migrant communities as an important skill, both for migrants' personal development and connection, and for creating an alternative voice about the condition of migrant workers from their own perspective. Some identified challenges are securing funding, organizing training, lack of familiarity with new tools, lack of time and energy especially among workers to produce media material (whether it is a radio project or blog materials (Constanza-Chock 2014). As a consequence, WCs experiment with small as well as broader scale experiments based on the goals they wish to achieve through specific platforms and digital infrastructures.

On a micro-scale, social networks, independent means of communication and media outlets can be crucial for workers in order to primarily connect with one another, and possibly, to unionize. One of the most prominent examples in this respect is of migrant domestic workers, whose scattered conditions favour the use of these tools to communicate and organize in the GCC countries by establishing informal networks and associations that keep them in touch and link them to their families of origin through instant messaging apps and other online technologies. These also serve them to ask for help in case of need. A similar pattern can be observed in other organizations unionizing migrant domestic workers such as the Indonesian Migrant Workers' Union in Hong Kong, which uses WhatsApp to organize their members (APMM 2015, 155). Besides, the Centre for Women's Development in Indonesia communicates on a regular basis with its members via SMS to keep track of their condition during the employment periods they spend abroad (Raharto & Noveria 2012, 11).

Obviously, social media and online tools do not function only as means of intra-network communications, as they are crucial for circulating information raising awareness and communicating the demands and struggles of marginalized workers' in their own voices and words. In the conflicted context of Southern Italy, the online RadioGhetto project (2012–16) set up by farmworkers and activists of the solidarity network Campagne in Lotta represented a tool for sharing the sociabilities and struggles for dignified housing and labour conditions of self-unionized migrants working and living in the shanty towns of Rignano Garganico and Borgo Mezzanone (www.radioghettovociliberre.wordpress.com).

Online media centres like the US-based Solidarity Centre and the UK-based LabourStart have a mission to collect and disseminate information and assist unions in campaigning and networking. In so doing, they might break news as well as promote the online publication of reports that illustrate the state of the art and advertise specific campaigns (i.e. the 2018–19 Solidarity Centre Annual Report). Therefore, WCs can publicize their causes through platforms such as LabourStart's ACTNow campaigning system or through social media. The latter also allow activists to coordinate their live actions (for instance, by calling a rally, promoting an online event, mail bombing and so on) without exposing their members to direct physical jeopardy, as in the case of sex and domestic workers.

Case study 4: Agricultural workers in Via Campesina

La Via Campesina Network groups unions, grassroots groups and activists who are engaged in the struggle for a different model of agricultural production, food and environmental justice. The social movements' origin of the network allows tracking a plurality of practices and community-based approaches that are at the core of the practices of WCs in their restricted as well as expanded definition. As it started from peasants' movements in Latin America, the foundation of La Via Campesina in 1993 stemmed from the resolution, matured during the 1980s, that the peasants' grassroots movements needed to upgrade their collective actions to a transnational scale to tackle effectively GVCs and GSCs that disenfranchise small-scale, rural and family agriculture. In fact, the network's foundation was rooted in the assessment of the negative implications of the globalization of agricultural markets in

terms of economic actors such as multinational companies, supranational regulations and GVCs crushing suppliers to maximize profits and competitiveness in the GSCs (Martínez-Torres & Rosset 2010). As of producers, La Via Campesina's original ambition was then to bridge the class, ethnic and cultural gaps separating agricultural workers and producers in the Global North and South. Besides, it aimed at being the interface of peasants' grassroots struggles in the anti-globalization movement and World Social Forums contesting supranational institutions and legislations such as the WTO, the IMF's austerity policies and the World Bank's land regulations (Bové 2001; Martínez-Torres & Rosset 2010). As a third pillar, La Via Campesina endorses an environmentally and socially sustainable model of agricultural production (defined as agroecology) that could ensure food security, food safety, public health and employment in rural areas and tackle the issues of the global food price crisis and climate change (ECVC 2018) as part of a global-scale agrarian and land-ownership reform (Borras 2008).

As of the supply side, La Via Campesina promotes a culture of ethical, responsible food consumption and fair-trade choices as part of a broader ambition for societal change towards an agroecological model of food production and consumption based on the principles of autonomy, self-management and food sovereignty (Juárez et al. 2015, 35). In terms of political orientation, La Via Campesina's network proactively endorsed pro-democracy, anti-austerity movements in Central and Latin America (CLOC – La Via Campesina, South America Organizations Political Declaration 2019) in contrast to the hegemonic political agenda (Juárez et al. 2015, 34). Regardless of the repression experienced by their affiliates in different parts of the world, La Via Campesina has chosen to remain independent of political parties, governments, religious institutions and NGOs, although not all of its affiliates retain this level of autonomy in their daily operations and local campaigns (Desmarais 2005).

Lastly, the network has developed internal collectives and working groups that are concerned with the specific challenges of migrant workers within agricultural GVCs and GSCs. The European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC), formed in 2006, started its proceedings as a working group, under the leadership of alternative unions' leaders who are members of the network. Since the 2010s, the network has moved towards more sustained forms of organization under the pressure of increasing racist attacks across the globe (e.g. the 2010 mass shooting of undocumented agricultural farmworkers in Rosarno, Italy) and the recurring "migratory crises" affecting the conditions of migrant labourers (ECVC 2017, 1).

Besides, the ECVC was formed in opposition to traditional unions' practices which, according to the ECVC, often deem migrant workers unprofitable and unorganizable according to their union model, therefore obliterating their voices and leadership capacity. Another critique brought forward by the ECVC towards traditional unions is the fact that they are unable to question the hegemonic industrialization of agricultural work and, therefore, the model of labour and environmental exploitation that comes attached to it. Against these limitations, the network aims at overcoming the still important role of denouncing the abuses suffered by agricultural workers across the globe and becoming a relevant actor in supporting the actions and alliances of local WCs and branches (ECVC 2017, 4). This ambition is represented by the La Via Campesina Declaration on Migration and Rural Workers published after the March 2015 World Social Forum in Tunis (La Via Campesina 2015). The document indicates 14 core demands that include the halt and repeal of all policies that criminalize migrants, equal labour market conditions for local and migrant workers, and the incorporation of the climate crisis in progressive labour and migration policies (La Via Campesina 2015).

As the geographical scales involved in La Via Campesina's actions and demands are multiple, the network has coupled "live", place-based actions with many online and open source tools that promote peer-to-peer networks and practices across various geographies (Anderson et al. 2019). This kind of approach derives from La Via Campesina's closeness to the experimentation with independent media outlets made by the global justice movement across the globe since the early 2000s. In particular, the website www.viacampesina.org aims to extend the network's purview beyond the actions of affiliates in order to foster the formation of struggles and communities across the globe. By the same token, the structure of the website reflects the richness of the digital tools that can increase the network's outreach

and publicity while maintaining an elevated degree of autonomy in the message and forms of expression they mobilize to disseminate the network's missions and actions.

Remarkably, the call for contributions to the website addresses farmers, agricultural workers, activists, filmmakers, radio producers and organizations beyond the network's membership, but united in their actions and messages by the same principles. Moreover, on the occasion of La Via Campesina's twentieth anniversary, the network inaugurated Via CampesinaTv, an open communication hub that collects and streams sounds, images and videos pertaining to the struggle for agroecology and food sovereignty all over the word. Hence, the hub is not meant to be the official voice of La Via Campesina network, as its presentation page clearly states. In general, the website works as a tool for disseminating the richness of practices and actors mobilizing the network, as well as the materials the network produces in its local and regional branches. According to this logic, the website and TV materials alternate posts and commentaries to Via Campesina's insights (e.g. the Declaration *Dignity for migrant workers and the movement for food sovereignty are the same struggle!*: Nyéléni 2018) with reposts of mobilizations external to the network, yet compatible with its causes and messages (e.g. the mobilization of the farmworkers' union representative Aboubakar Soumahoro in Rome during a post-COVID general meeting promoted by the Italian government: La Via Campesina 2020).

At the same time, the availability of materials on local campaigns, meetings and actions reflects the ramifications of the network in different geographical areas and of the local chapters' ability to do networking and influential activities. One of the more prominent areas of intervention highlighted in the website is concerned with the living and wage rights of migrant farmworkers. The newsfeed "Dignity for Migrants and Waged Workers" is updated on a regular basis with information regarding protests and campaign across the globe, which intermingle with hot topics in global politics. For instance, during June 2020, the vast majority of the posts was dedicated to the occupational safety and health and visas implications of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

For instance, the TV also contains the live streaming and recording of La Via Campesina's conferences, including the latest proceedings of the La Coordinadora Latinoamerica de Organizaciones del Campo, CLOC-LVC, held in La Habana (Cuba) in the presence of 400 delegates from all over the world. The website, therefore, works in lieu of a formalized monitoring and evaluation system as it constitutes an online register of the network's activities across the world. Further, "each event has a document or declaration on the work carried out in every area, and in the conferences assessments about the movement and the work topics are generated" (Juárez et al. 2015: 27). As most of the featured channels are based in Central and Latin America, the primary language of the hub's entries is Spanish, followed by English and French; nevertheless, the website collects contributions in all languages available.

How can the ILO support WCs' good practices?

The previous inventory of good practices and outstanding case studies illustrates the different types of actions taken by WCs constellations in order to pursue strategic goals concerned with fundamental rights at work, living conditions and the health and safety of disenfranchised workers, with emphasis upon the marginalized migrant labour force. In general, these actions are propaedeutic in light of the struggles that demand the major goals stressed by the ILO conventions: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (Bosc 2019; ILO 2003). From the prior analyses, two streams of impact of supranational institutions (first and foremost the ILO given its unique nature and scope) clearly emerge. The first one pertains to the leverage that the ILO can exert towards multi-level stakeholders, including nation-states and transnational corporations, in order to achieve crucial milestones, even across complex GVCs and GSCs. The second concerns the overpowering effect that authoritative institutions like the ILO can have on local-based, fragile WCs actors.

As for the first aspect, the ILO has identified components and actions in support of decent

Box 8. Strawberry fields of abuse and resistance (Spain)

Agricultural work in European countries is increasingly and almost exclusively assigned to migrant workers due to the hard working conditions involved, low wages and the lack of inspection by the authorities. The case of strawberry pickers in the Spanish province of Huelva has been often reported by international news (Alami 2019) and academic research (Filigrana 2020; Raigada 2020) because of recurring labour conflicts in intersection with poor living conditions, racist discrimination and sexual abuse. Alternative trade unions such as Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores/as and advisory offices for migrants (for example, the Seville Oficina de Derechos Sociales), among other CSOs, have supported the lawsuits and protests of these migrant workers, although no specific self-managed workers' centre was established in the agricultural areas. Additionally, it is contradictory that the small farmers, who hired migrant workers, set up cooperatives for the distribution of their produce and demanded agrarian reform, joined La Via Campesina, an organization that, in turn, is part of the coalition that supports the claims of the waged migrant workers too.

The first phase of immigrant work in the area took place in the 1990s. Most of the newcomers were from Morocco, Mauritania and sub-Saharian countries. They were young and predominantly male, usually undocumented but aiming at reuniting their families in Spain. Large shanty settlements emerged in that period and continue to date, despite the protests of UN delegates on extreme poverty (El Salto 2020). By 2001, a Temporary Guest Farm Workers Programme began to recruit workers from eastern Europe and from Morocco too, but this time, employers only wanted women as mothers (with young dependents) and from poor rural areas because they were considered more docile, disciplined and hardworking. The programme required contracts signed in the country of origin and the return of the workers to their own countries once the work permits expired. As many reports have shown, these migrant workers have systematically experienced sexual harassment and assault, rape, human trafficking and several labour violations. Accounts of unpaid overtime, physical violence, racist insults, no bathroom breaks, prohibition of drinking water during long working hours, employment instability, arbitrary firings, immediate deportations, employers' control of leisure time and overcrowded accommodation also abounded (SAT 2018). Hunger strikes and sit-ins were held in 2001 and resulted in an extraordinary regularization of many migrant workers. The institutional Board of Migrations was criticized for demobilizing workers, so an alternative Temporary Workers Board was set up to provide legal advice and support, organizing demonstrations and other protests at the farms and fostering their self-organization.

jobs (ILO 2010) that resonate with the demands and good practices advocated by WCs:

1. Trade unions leadership and capacity building

In order to pursue the Decent Work Agenda, the ILO continues increase the institutional capacity of workers' organizations by developing advocacy materials such as communication strategies and tools focusing on relevant policy areas as well as supporting social dialogue and collective bargaining at all levels and by elaborating curricula and implementing training programmes with a focus on the role and voice of trade unions in ensuring policy coherence. At the global level, the ILO has also been contributing to developing knowledge and documenting good practices on new forms of representation and organizational models, including with respect to the use of digital technologies in organizing and service provision to trade union members.[9] Capacity building of workers' organizations, including in the organization and extension of services to workers, is brought forward by different actors and stakeholders, ranging from individual union staff, volunteers and independent educators to international

9 ILO, *Programme and budget for the biennium 2020-21*, 2020.

confederations such as the ITUC (see ITUC 2017) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV). Some examples of the results achieved in recent years comprise the expansion of coverage of collective bargaining in Argentina, Jordan, Malawi, Sierra Leone and the United Republic of Tanzania, the creation of a trade union network to advocate for workers' rights in the palm oil sector in Indonesia and the opening of a second Migrant Resource Centre providing information and counselling services to potential migrants in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.[10]

2. Decent wages and working conditions

Wages are among the most important conditions of work and a central subject of collective bargaining. By supporting multiple actions promoting the formalization of decent wages thresholds all over the world, the ILO advocates for policies on wages and incomes that ensure a just share of the fruits of progress to all and a minimum living wage for all employed based on a set of ILO conventions, including the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131). Besides, the ILO promotes and defends workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining at all levels (from GFAs to sectorial negotiations) that are aimed at improving the conditions of largely deregulated, informal sectors such as the domestic, informal and rural ones through a comprehensive, integrated approach that engages workers as much as employers. One example of this integration is set by the Fair Recruitment Initiative that aims to help prevent human trafficking and protect the rights of workers, including migrant workers, from abusive and fraudulent recruitment practices and is implemented in collaboration with governments, representative employers' and workers' organizations, the private sector and other key partners.

3. Occupational safety and health

The fundamental importance of occupational safety and health to decent work has been confirmed by the adoption of numerous international labour standards specifically dealing with occupational safety and health. Some of the key instruments include the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) and its accompanying Recommendation No. 197; the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and its Protocol of 2002; the Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161) of 1985 and its Recommendation (No. 171) as well as a series of occupational safety and health conventions related to particular branches of economic activity (ie. construction, mines, agriculture) and to specific risks (i.e. radiation, cancer, chemicals). The Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) adopted in 2019 and its related Recommendation (No. 206) also help in promoting a safer environment at work. With the adoption of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work in 2019, the ILC further recognized that "safe and healthy working conditions are fundamental to decent work" (Part II, para.D) and that all workers should enjoy adequate protection in accordance with the Decent Work Agenda, taking into account "safety and health at work" in addition to the respect of their fundamental rights, an adequate minimum wage and maximum limits of working hours (Part III, para.B). In addition to this framework, specific projects contribute to unroll single as well as partnered actions for the workers' occupational safety and health, which is especially jeopardized within informal, migrant labour sectors.

4. Gender employment and equality

As the *Gender equality at the heart of decent work* report sums up (ILO 2009), gender equality is one of the constitutive pillars of the ILO's action since its foundation and has been recalled in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. Some important ILO conventions related to equality of opportuniy and treatment are: the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111); the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156); the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) (ILO 2010) and the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190). This set of conventions represents the underpinnings for integrated research-action projects such as the "Action-oriented research on gender equality and the working and living conditions of garment factory workers in Cambodia" (ILO 2012a) which investigated the manifestations of both direct and indirect discrimination against

10 ILO, *ILO programme implentation 2018–19*, GB.338/PFA/1 (2020).

women in the garment factories of the industrial areas of Phnom Penh through fieldwork research conducted from June to September 2011 (ILO 2012a, 6–10). Gender equality is also possibly the strategic goal for which the ILO has considered incentivising outside-the-box, complementary models (i.e. promoting workers' cooperatives and representative organizations for conducting collective bargaining) aimed at empowering female workers especially in labour- and informality-intensive sectors such as the domestic one (Kagan 2017, 21–24).

5. Environmental and social sustainability

The inseparability of these two elements is asserted in documents such as the ILO's 2015 Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all and the cooperation with cooperative enterprises (ILO 2013b). In particular, the ILO was one of the launching partners of the "Green Jobs Initiative Partnership" initiative together with the United Nations Environment Programme and ITUC. In the action framework, sustainable jobs are intended as both environmentally and socially decent ones. This led to projects such as the GLO/14/60/NOR and GLO/14/75/SID, funded by Norway and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in order to promote the accession and implementation of the ILO's Core Conventions and social dialogue, with the Sida's specific focus on the actions to be taken in GVCs and EPZs. The ILO's ability and legitimation in convening different actors and stakeholders is also at the core of the ILO's action in favour of cooperatives and their organization.

Against this backdrop, the impact of international institutions like the ILO on the protection of fundamental rights at work even for non-formally unionized workers and members of WCs can be also observed in the aforementioned case studies. Primarily, the ILO's role is pivotal for setting standards that become global thresholds of fundamental relevance, especially when concerned with economic sectors where informality, deregulation and exploitation of vulnerable workers prevail. This is exemplified by Convention No. 189 & Recommendation No. 201 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers (ILO 2011) as for the plight of migrant workers employed in hazardous domestic work situations. These conventions paved the way for a series of actions where the ILO can be a key actor as a facilitator for stipulating landmark agreements across multinational actors and stakeholders, as in the case of the Rana Plaza agreement.

The ILO can also act as a facilitator for the drafting, adoption and endorsement of policy documents and frameworks agreement. Besides, the ILO's function is critical for exerting the necessary pressure and vigilance on the adoption and actual upholding of institutional and corporate commitments. This is visible, for instance, in the case of the complaint concerning the non-observance by Qatar of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), made by delegates to the 103rd Session (2014) of the ILC under article 26 of the ILO Constitution (GB.331/INS/13(Rev.) On the other hand, the ILO's recommendations to dismantle the kafala system in Lebanon and in particular, the introduction of a new standard unified contract have been put on hold by the State Council of Lebanon, as the recent COVID-19 pandemic has shown (Associated Press 2020). In June 2020, stranded Ethiopian domestic workers urged their embassies to take action for their health, safety and repatriation as many were left unemployed and stripped of their own documents by local employers who could not, or refused to, afford their wages as the crisis and the Lebanese currency devaluation occurred. However, under the kafala scheme, workers cannot afford to change their employer without losing their legal status Zeina Mezher, the ILO's focal person in Lebanon for labour migration issues, observed (Sewell 2020).

Hence, it can be asserted that the aforementioned case studies support an inclusive approach by supranational institutions like the ILO in order to encourage WC constellations to embrace them as strategic partners, or at least as tactical allies that could support the consolidation of progressive sets of practices and regulations (Bosc 2019). This goal is embraced by the Partnership and advocacy category of change prioritized in the ILO's long-term Integrated Strategy on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 2017-2023 (ILO 2019). Further, it is validated even by the availability of well-established, grassroots networks to interact with supranational institutions as they are acknowledged as crucial actors in the achievement of multi-scalar milestones. This approach is exemplified by La Via Campesina's network that the early 2000s

had expanded enough to legitimize itself as a key player in the international sphere. The network has committed, during the last two decades, to consolidating multi-scalar infrastructures (such as regional secretariats) that could work as a proxy for place-based, controversial regional negotiations and even supranational agreements that were conceived as alternative spaces for determining agricultural, trade and land policies (Martínez-Torres & Rosset 2010, 162). Based on this tactical approach, the network took part in the meetings promoted by transnational bodies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization's agroecology conferences in Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO 2016).

On the other hand, it is important to bear in mind that top-down structured and funded interventions such as the ILO might end up disempowering WC constellations whose infrastructures are not solid because of contextual and organizational limitations. The partnership of a strong actor like the ILO could then determine the empowerment of rank-and-file local leaders engaging in poorly structured and resourceless WCs in favour of "externally selected", yet more qualified leaders. Grassroots leadership and local autonomy are still fundamental to developing infrastructures where alternative modalities of labour, social relations and organizing that take heterogeneity and difference into account can be experimented with (Grazioli 2018; English et al. 2019), as exemplified by the case of Territorio Doméstico in Madrid (see Section 4 of this report). This aspect is also underlined in the final report of the Outcome 10 – GLO/14/60/NOR & GLO/14/75/SID projects:

> The core mission of the ILO depends on strong, independent and representative workers' (and employers') organizations, able to play a full role in achieving a strong tripartite system. As several project beneficiaries argued, this requires constant support through capacity-building, training and other forms of assistance. Industrial peace and civil society cannot be achieved through tripartism alone, but has to be supported through activities specifically for workers' organizations. (EVAL, n.d.: 7)

Therefore, as the ILO strategically points to immediate and long-term effectiveness in a multi-scalar field of action, it might want to reconsider the implications of its bottom-up and top-down interventions (ILO 2019b, 7). As for the pursuit of the partnership and advocacy category of change, the bottom line of action is that economic actors (above all, workers' and employers' representative organizations) do not have the same weight and lobbying power in the social, political and economic realms. As a consequence, the ILO should take into account this substantial inequality in order to, at least, level the field of industrial relations by giving priority to the weakest actors (workers in general and marginalized, migrant and informal workers in particular) without suffocating their autonomy. In particular, the ILO might reinforce its action as a proxy for attaining the necessary policy frameworks to guarantee WCs representational security, bargaining power and essential resources. Additionally, as a partner, it could share resources and facilities without stripping vulnerable workers of their voice and agency (ILO 2002; Chant & Pedwell 2008).

6. Conclusion

This literature review is aimed at knowing the role of WCs to understand the situation and evolution of fundamental principles and rights at work (ILO 2002, 2019). According to the above analysis, we have addressed the following questions:

1. Why, how, and where have WCs developed over time (2000–20) across different world regions?
2. What are the impacts of WCs on the struggles for improving workers' rights?

In this final summary of our findings, we will focus, in particular, on four specific topics:

1. the constraining and enabling contexts of WCs in terms of the political economy of labour and migration regimes in different geographies worldwide;
2. the gender and intersectionality features of migrant workers involved in WCs and related labour struggles;
3. WCs as safe and autonomous spaces in relation to their constituencies and other organizations from their surrounding environment;
4. good practices and strategies developed by WCs and akin expressions of labour organizing by migrant and other vulnerable workers.

To conclude, we determine the major trends and significant differences observed in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of WCs.

Definition

The introduction (Section 1) has outlined the existing body of literature pertaining to the ground definition of WCs and our proposal for an expanded notion. First of all, we have discussed the availability of a specific space functioning as a WC which can be established at different stages of the struggle of migrant workers, or even not being necessarily possible when specific labour and migration regimes prevent activists from setting it up. The reference of WCs can serve, however, as a guideline for similar multi-scalar actions and alliances that facilitate the labour organizing, unionizing and claim-making of migrants, not only in the productive sphere, but also in the reproductive realms of community life, housing conditions, health and education, closely associated to campaigns against discriminatory policies, racialization and social marginalization at large. In this respect, we propose conceptualizing WCs as socio-spatial constellations of multiple actors and actions converging to accomplish not only fundamental principles and rights at work (e.g. living wages, freedom of association, collective bargaining, etc.), but also better living conditions beyond the workplace.

Contexts

In terms of the geographical contexts we examined in Section 2, the WC model as a practice and concept was arguably born in the US in the 1980s, although similar experiences with other names can be found elsewhere. Different causes contributed to the rise of this mode of labour organizing in the US:

1. the continuous dissolution of the industrial relations pattern that was built in the aftermath of the Second World War, and especially once neoliberal policies and more intense global flows of capital and people fully unfolded;
2. a greater inflow of migrant populations mostly coming from Asian and Latin American countries who found an increasingly bifurcating labour market, less labour protection, declining unionizing, and more restrictions to achieve a regular citizenship status that could leverage the price of their working force and their labour conditions.

Not only migrants, but also women, youth and other vulnerable social groups experienced the highest levels of insecurity, casualization, precariousness, informality and abuse at work. Traditional trade unions faced various dilemmas when dealing with these components of the global working class, but a general lack of integration in their organizations, collective bargaining efforts and protest actions triggered the setting up of alternative labour struggles and organizing attempts such as WCs, community

unions and social movements unionism. However, different socio-spatial contexts and strategic options gave birth to different expressions of alternative unionizing.

In many OECD countries (the US, first of all) many participants in WCs are extra-union activists who previously took part in other grassroots social movements. In some Asian countries (Indonesia, Philippines, China, etc.) activists in migrant workers' struggles usually are members of NGOs, combining labour and human rights concerns. Sometimes, as we have seen in Japan, they are unionists of rank-and-file organizations outside the consolidated system of industrial relations. In many places across the world, as in the agricultural sector where a massive migrant workforce is hired, community members, with or without a regular gathering space, forge alliances with labourers that support their demands for fair treatment, living wages, decent living conditions and policies that end their marginalization.

These and other campaigners we have reviewed in the report share their willingness and determination to intervene in a section of the labour market where labour abuse, human rights violations and social exclusion based on ethnicity, caste and migratory status, among other grounds, are regularly experienced, and the unions' operation is missing. Therefore, WCs are usually established as a means to develop labour advocacy and organizing, in addition to other services and activities, outside the reach of traditional trade unions, while sometimes creating their own unions. Why are trade unions missing in such contexts? They can be simply banned like in many Asian and GCC countries. Otherwise, their existence is regulated according to different industrial relations models. In most models, a decline of union density was prominent over the last few decades. The focus on the workplace and labour negotiations vis-à-vis employers left aside many reproductive needs of the weakest workers regarding health, housing, education, racism and concerns over their regularization. Further, formal trade unions hardly reach economic sectors where employers can easily fire employees or displace their business elsewhere. On the contrary, as we observed in many Latin American countries, despite the widespread growth of informality, industrial relations systems based on mandatory and exclusive negotiation with legally recognized unions facilitate the creation of alternative labour movements even inside the dominant and largest unions.

A remarkable finding that we draw from the examples reviewed is the importance of scale when it comes to the understanding of migrant workers' labour organizing. In particular, the transient condition of migrants has immediate effects on their organizing capacity. WCs in the US and Europe, for instance, attracted Latino migrant workers who brought up their political commitment and experience from their origin countries where vigorous social struggles have taken place in recent decades. Evidence from various Asian countries relates to the movement of building up transnational alliances and upscaling local problems of migrant workers. In the cases of circular migration imposed on domestic workers by the kafala system, for example, affecting domestic workers in the GCC countries, NGOs in the origin countries offer more support than embassies' shelters. The anti-sweatshop campaigns in the garment industry of the Indian sub-continent and Southeast Asia in general are also mobilizing transnational coalitions that are slowly modifying the inhumane hardships of both internal and international migrants. Either as WCs or other forms of labour struggle and mutual support in their (sometimes online) communities, migrant workers are confronted with the multi-scalar nature of both the moves of capital and the resistance of labour. However, traditional unions and corporatist-like models of labour relations have hardly engaged with those intersecting scales and forms of oppression despite some valuable attempts such as the Solidarity Center (US) and ITUC-Africa.

In the case of the Asian and MENA regions, we have accounted for a great heterogeneity of phenomena, from weak or almost non-existent labour movements in most GCC countries to flourishing and vibrant migrant-led labour rights movements in Hong Kong. The kafala system in the GCC countries has been widely criticized for contributing to the vulnerabilities of migrant workers employed mostly in the construction and domestic sectors. The curtailment of freedom of association by the state resulted in weak and dangerous organizing of migrant workers. Monitoring and advocacy of the rights of migrant workers are driven mostly by international organizations and NGOs while government-sponsored shelters run by the migrant origin countries and destination countries offer

temporary assistance to distressed migrants. Sometimes, faith-based groups may also provide a safe space for migrants to meet and claim their labour rights, or even a platform to set up their own unions. Interestingly, illegal migrant workers may have a higher level of freedom of association, as shown in workers' collectives taking place in rented apartments in Lebanon.

In East, South and Southeast Asia, rapid industrial development shapes the labour migration patterns in the region, from internal migration, intraregional migration to interregional migration. When it comes to WCs or other alternative organizing forms, industrial relations, availability of political space and the attitude of local unions influence their activism. Self-help groups are either community-based or sector-based. The region has also witnessed the emergence of hybrid unions, whose forms also vary. They range from individual-based unions across selected sectors in Japan to community-based unions, migrant-founded and migrant-led unions. They can also include unions with returned migrants, prospective migrants and migrants' families as members, as we observed in Indonesia and the Philippines. In Hong Kong, where migrant workers experience more freedom of association in comparison to other countries, migrant workers are engaged in public protests on various social, economic and political issues, indicating the potential of WCs in mobilizing workers' political influence. In India, WCs and self-help groups could often serve as "pre-unions." In response to the fragmentation of migrant workers at the end of GVCs, international collaborations and transnational networks or alliances give local WCs and unions stronger leverage to pressure global buyers to demand better working and living conditions of workers from their suppliers.

Gender and intersectionality

In addition to common work-related problems faced by low-wage migrant labourers, women workers face gender-specific vulnerabilities. In Section 3, we have seen how global capitalism depends on cheap women's labour, whether it is female factory workers at the bottom end of the global manufacturing chain or domestic workers as part of the global care chain. The devaluation of women's work results in the dismissal of women's substantial contribution to the survival of their families and to more just working environments. Sometimes, intimidation and harassment from employers and male union leaders prevent migrant women from forming a collective voice against discriminations in the workplace. Similarly, gender expectations about women's positions in families and communities hinder women from actively participating in unions or WCs.

The literature shows that WCs that focus on migrant women play an important role in introducing the notion of gendered work in the discussion about labour movements. Through issues such as family ties, domestic violence, childcare, migration and sexuality, women's WCs empower workers to change the narrative of workers as genderless commodities in GVCs to workers subject to intersectional oppressions whose productive and reproductive needs are often unmet in many labour struggles. As noted in many of the struggles and WCs examined before, the adoption of Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, for instance, symbolizes the victory of collective labour movements at the international level and challenges the isolated nature of domestic work through global standardization of decent working and living conditions for domestic workers. This is one of the positive indicators of the potential of WCs to mobilize a collective voice of migrant workers while taking gender and intersectional perspectives into account.

Safe and autonomous spaces

Section 4 has critically reviewed the role of WCs in relation to three fundamental dimensions: firstly, their role as safe spaces, especially when tackling the inequalities produced in the intersection between migration management and labour policies; secondly, their autonomy and cooperation with other state as well as non-state stakeholders; and lastly, their local integration in reference to the disenfranchised communities they wish to mobilize as well as to broader local populations that could configure pivotal support networks for their operations.

With regard to the first point, the unionizing of migrant workers represents a valid analytical proxy for understanding the extension of WCs' action beyond workplaces and labour-related controversies, moving towards the inclusion of community issues such as no-border and anti-racist campaigns as well as popular education and rank-and-file leadership training. They, therefore, counter the trend of unions' decline

and compartmentalized approaches that can be observed worldwide. If traditional trade unions do not reach, incorporate and fight for the rights of migrant workers, the latter either set up their own trade unions or shape WCs where to safely discuss, strategize and prepare their labour claim-making while recreating their living communities.

Secondly, programmes, disputes and solidarity actions can be deployed autonomously or in connection with other non-state stakeholders (i.e. established trade unions, NGOs, local social movements and local communities), and can pool from different sets of resources, ranging from governmental funding to private donors and grassroots crowdsourcing. Autonomy is an expression of self-organization, mostly independent from established trade unions. However, both funding and necessary alliances may limit that autonomy. Further, as noted in various contexts, the WCs' agency might be significantly curtailed by conditions such as the illegality of collective organizing, the informal or individualized structure of the industry, the globalized structure of production throughout multiple sites and firms, the socio-spatial segregation as workers and residents, and the xenophobic and racist social environments. In these cases, WCs may accept a certain degree of erosion of their autonomy in return for being equipped with resources, obtaining broader support to their actions and achieving trans-local outreach (i.e. affiliating to international union federations or cooperating with international NGOs). The loose boundaries of the local communities where WCs and related struggles of migrant workers are rooted also contribute to the same tension between autonomy, cooperation, and safety, as shown by the struggle of day labourers in the US.

Good practices and strategies

Section 5 scrutinized a number of relatively successful cases of WCs worldwide. Above all, we argued that the generalization of good practices may be misleading if the specific contextual conditions are not taken into account. For conceptual purposes, we have identified four patterns of action that are constantly mixed and matched in order to achieve the WCs' goals: place-based actions, regional coalitions, transnational campaigning and online activism. Exemplary case studies allowed us an in-depth understanding of those strategies: Territorio Doméstico in Madrid (Spain) shows how migrant domestic workers engaged in mainly place-based actions; in the same vein, the campaigns for the dignity of migrant domestic workers in GCC countries and, to some extent, in the sending countries of Central Africa, evince the scope of regional coalitions; the transnational campaigns for living wages in the Asian garment sector reveal the connections of WCs with other allies and various spheres of political action beyond the workplace; the independent media outlet created by the farmworkers' network La Via Campesina represents a valuable reference for online activism in which migrant workers' demands and some experiences of WCs are also considered.

In addition, the ILO's role in the development of WCs has been analysed. On the one hand, we appreciate the remarkable coincidence between the WCs movement and the key areas of intervention identified by the ILO since its foundation (ILO 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2012, 2019). Although WCs have emerged as self-organized manifestations of migrant workers' needs and can hardly reach the institutional realm where the ILO usually operates, many ILO conventions are used as the core of the political agenda of labour activists and WCs alike. We thus assume that the ILO can be a crucial ally for WCs in fostering their lobbying capacities, upholding labour standards, promoting and supervising complex international agreements, and providing resources to grassroots initiatives of community unionizing. On the other hand, the weight and resourcefulness of the ILO can risk trumping the autonomy of weak WCs, both in their single as well as expanded configurations – for example, by replacing local rank-and-file leadership with ILO-trained union leaders.

Strengths and weaknesses of WCs

Drawing upon the literature reviewed earlier, the following strengths of WCs stand out:

1. Engagement with place-based collective actions beyond the WC itself: Local communities allow multiple interactions with other activist groups, and to launch campaigns and initiatives with their support.
2. Struggles for rights at work are often combined with training for activists, members or their constituency at

large, and also with broader campaigns facing intersectional social inequalities, marginalization, violence, racism and reproductive needs related to food, housing, health and education. Hence, successful WCs usually follow a "double track" of struggles both in relation to workplaces (or specific industrial sectors) and working conditions on the one hand and broader political and emancipatory agendas, including living conditions and social life at large on the other.

3. Labour and migration regimes are the main structural conditions that WCs oppose insofar as they facilitate labour exploitation, abuse and discrimination. In so doing, they join other social movements and grassroots organizations. These campaigns tend to occur within national boundaries, despite the local character of the coalitions of most WCs.
4. At supra-local scales, WCs may engage with international campaigns and manifold organizations to face border policies and global value and care chains. These efforts mainly target the rights to collective bargaining, wages and corporate accountability. Thus, transnational unions and NGOs pursuing the implementation of the ILO Conventions and GFAs may tie different WCs with one another.
5. When the pressures of international networking and campaigning are not sufficiently effective, other strategies point to employers and mediating agencies in order to make sure that decent, fair and legal conditions are met. This goal may be achieved either through autonomous "fair recruitment" organizations or through bilateral agreements between migrants' outgoing and incoming countries.
6. Online platforms, radio stations, coordination of campaigns, dissemination and self-help groups on instant messaging are widespread tools that WCs members and related forms of migrants' struggles are increasingly using.

Finally, from a critical standpoint, we need to emphasize the constraints that global capitalism and intersectional oppressions exert over the self-organization of migrant workers as it unfolds in the experience of WCs. In particular, temporary migration schemes, restricted policies against asylum seekers and the overwhelming predominance of the employers' interests in sectors where massive supply of migrant workers occurs, make bottom-up organizing and unionizing extremely difficult. The neoliberal management of migratory status and the institutional exclusions engendered by outdated migratory systems (kafala, hukou, etc.) and even the so-called humanitarian industrial complex are regular obstacles in the way of WCs.

Neoliberal policies have enabled the outsourcing of productive work to migrant workers and other workers in precarious situations, hence transforming the economy, as a result of which traditional blue-collar sectors of unionization have lost the predominence that they used to have in the '50s and '60s. In parallel, those geographic areas where those blue collar jobs were concentrated have gone through processes of prolonged deindustrialization. The discourse on the competitive nature of migrant workers for jobs and welfare benefits, regardless of the lack of evidence, opens up fissures between WCs and trade unions. Many unions also lack an intersectional perspective and concern about the fates of disenfranchised, marginalized, casual, informal and even isolated workers in rural settlements or at private homes. Community and reproductive issues are seldom considered in close interplay with labour struggles for minimum wage, collective bargaining, wage theft, sexual harassment and racial discrimination at work. These are precisely the motivations of WCs that, ironically, make their collaboration with established trade unions difficult.

Another dimension of the WCs' weaknesses is their capacity to remain connected to local communities and train local leadership. On the one hand, as WCs expand, they deal with the same problems as traditional labour unions: corporatism, bureaucratization, professionalization, hierarchical structures and uneven redistribution of resources, especially when they are affiliated to larger organizations (i.e. federations of unions). Further, when the state or NGOs support WCs, external funding might represent a pivotal resource for ensuring their regular operations and agency, which may limit their autonomous decisions and even the choice of confrontational tactics. In addition, funding institutions might prefer to train and interact with their own leadership,

whose agendas and methodologies might collide with those of local and rank-and-file organizers from WCs and migrant communities alike. These problems thus can detach the broad socio-spatial constellations of different actors and actions around WCs (especially when they are hindered by legal constraints and hostile environments) from their territorially-based facilities and constituencies, both in and beyond the workplace.

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Appendix 1: Methodological note

In order to answer our research questions, we first collected written evidence, proceeded to interpret it, and then wrote the draft and final reports.

The written evidence is divided into two categories:

1. Academic sources
2. Non-academic sources

As for the academic sources, these mainly include:

a. Articles in academic journals
b. Book chapters
c. Books (monographs and edited volumes)

The techniques to identify the relevant academic materials followed the standard procedures:

i. Search engines in university libraries
ii. Free access search engines such as Google Scholar, Researchgate and Academia.edu
iii. Snowball sampling according to the literature mentioned in every single source
iv. Consultation with colleagues and scholars worldwide

As for the non-academic sources, these include:

a. Publications by trade unions
b. Publications by NGOs and non-profit CSOs
c. Policy reports from governmental bodies and international organizations
d. News and reports produced by WCs
e. Journalistic accounts

In this case, the snowball technique was implemented by first departing from the academic sources. In addition, we have followed clues provided by academics and activists engaged in WCs. English-language publications have enjoyed the priority in our search, but pieces in other languages that the authors are familiar with were also included.

Two key methodological criteria that we have observed are:

1. Sampling
2. Saturation

Sampling decisions (to choose a number of elements within a set) are needed when it is unfeasible to know the whole of the research target, or when its boundaries are uncertain. The time constraints of this research project did not allow for the implemention of a systematic random sampling. Instead, purposeful and theoretical sampling took the lead. This means that we intended to cover all the implications of the research questions and the underlying theoretical assumptions and frameworks – a fundamental principles and rights at work lens.

On a secondary level, sampling by quota was also required. This means that in this study no topic could be left without a sufficient number of items (academic and non-academic sources of information) being sampled. Sampling by quota is also applicable to the geographical regions that are relevant for this literature review. In particular, we distinguished three socio-spatial contextualizations:

Area 1: The Arab states, the Middle East and Asia

Area 2: OECD countries (despite some of them being geographically placed in Area 1)

Area 3: Africa and Latin America

As already mentioned, snowball sampling facilitates following the chain of related items (sources of information) in order to gather enough and relevant data. According to this qualitative strategy, a low number of items suffices for each topic and geographical area. This number was preliminarily set at 20 items per topic (although the same item might cover various topics simultaneously).

Regarding saturation, the rationale behind this criterion was to collect as many arguments and data as possible until every new addition did not contribute significantly to the prior ones. In short, this means that once an argument

or evidence is sufficiently established, there is no need to add new sources of information. Therefore, the reading and summarizing of the gathered materials was conducted immediately so that the saturation threshold could be assessed at an early stage. This criterion also helped regulate and determine the final sample of items.

Finally, the interpretation process depends on the procedure of content and discourse analysis, which is inherent to academic scholarship. This implies, above all, that the information is structured in relation to a list of thematic codes (topics) and subcodes according to the main research questions and the outline of contents.

Secondly, critical contextualization and logical argumentation follow. In this regard, the authors of this report have considered both internal and external contexts. Internal contexts are related to the whole text in which every argument and evidence are included, but also to the theoretical strand and intellectual trajectory of the authors of the papers as far as it is possible to identify them. External contexts are related to the socio-spatial conditions to which the arguments and evidences apply – migration flows and policies, welfare regimes, labour markets and the nature of industrial relations. A critical stance means that both contexts are interrogated and disclosed, especially when they are not explicit in the examined materials.

Logical argumentation entails mutual internal relationships and non-contradiction. In this particular literature review, internal relationships are guided by an incremental understanding of the role of WCs in the struggles for workers' rights. Hence, every section of the report is connected to the previous ones in order to reinforce and expand the main arguments. The unity of the report should be also reflected in its consistency and coherence, i.e. its non-contradictory outcome.

Appendix 2: Useful links and addresses

Global and international union federations

IndustriALL
Website: http://www.industriall-union.org/
Email: info@industriall-union.org

International Migrant Alliance (IMA)
Website: https://wearemigrants.net/, https://www.facebook.com/intlmigrants/

International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF)
Website: info@industriall-union.org
Email: office@itglwf.org

La Via Campesina
Website: https://viacampesina.org/en/write-us/

LabourStart
Website: https://www.labourstart.org/news/index2019.php

The Solidarity Center
Website: www.solidaritycenter.org

UNI Global Union
Website: www.uniglobalunion.org
Email: contact@uniglobalunion.org

The Arab States, Middle East and Asia

Al-Hassan Workers' Centre, Jordan
Website: http://workerscenterassociation.com
Phone: +96 278 1450 298

The Alliance of Migrant Domestic Workers, Lebanon
Website: www.facebook.com/TheAllianceOfMDWsLeb/
Email: mdwsalliancelebanon@gmail.com

Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong (ATKI-HK), Hong Kong
Website: https://www.facebook.com/ATKIHK/

Bethune House, Hong Kong
Website: https://bethunehouse.org/
Email: shelter@bethunehouse.org.hk
Phone: +852 2721 3119

Centre for Women's Development (PPSW), Indonesia
Website: https://ppsw.or.id/
Email: sekretariat@ppsw.or.id Phone: +62 21 8660 3788

Chinese Working Women Network (CWWN), Hong Kong
Website: http://www.cwwn.org/

Dooars Jagron, India
Website: http://dooarsjagron.org/
Email: dooars.jagron@yahoo.com
Phone: +91 97494 78357 / 97332 25747

Garment Mahila Karmikara Munnade (Munnade)
Website: https://gatwu.wordpress.com/munnade/

Hope Workers' Center, Taiwan
Website: https://hopeworkerscenter.org/, https://www.facebook.com/Hope.Workers.Center/
Phone: +886 3 425 5416

Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (IMWU), Hong Kong
Website: https://www.facebook.com/IMWUHK/
Email: imwu.hk@gmail.com
Phone: +852 6992 0878

Migrant-Rights.Org, Middle East
Website: https://www.migrant-rights.org/

Migrant Community Center, Beirut
Website: https://armlebanon.org/migrant-community-center-beirut, https://www.facebook.com/mccleb/
Email: mccbeirut@armlebanon.org

Migrante International, the Philippines
Website: https://migranteinternational.org/about/
Email: homeoffice@migranteinternational.org
Phone: +632 936 0162

Panyu Migrant Workers Center, China
Website: blog.sina.com.cn/dgzngo
Email: dgzngo@163.com
Phone: +86 20 3921 2599

Self-Employed Women's Association, India:
Website: http://www.sewa.org/
Email: mail@sewa.org
Phone: +91 79 25506444

OECD countries

Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN International), USA
Website: https://acorninternational.org/index.php/acorn-international-affiliates/

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), USA
Website: https://aflcio.org/contact

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA), USA
Website: https://www.aiwa.org/
Email: info@aiwa.org
Phone: +1 510 268-0192

Associazione Nazionale Oltre le Frontiere – Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (ANOLF - CISL), Italy
Website: http://www.anolf.it/
Email: anolf@anolf.it

Campagne in Lotta, Italy
Website: https://campagneinlotta.org/en/home/

Camera del lavoro autonomo e precario (CLAP), Italy
Website: http://www.clap-info.net/
Phone: +39 347 0913 692

Conferazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro – Istituto Nazionale Confederale di Assistenza (CGIL - INCA), Italy
Website: https://www.inca.it/
Email: info@inca.it
Phone: +39 06 855 631

Change to Win Coalition, USA
Website: http://www.changetowin.org/
Email: info@changetowin.org
Phone: +1 202 721 0660

Chinese Staff Workers Association (CSWA), USA
Website: http://cswa.org/?lang=en
Email: cswa@cswa.org
Phone: +1 212 334 2333

Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), UK
Website: https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/

Confederazione dei Comitati di Base (COBAS), Italy
Website: http://www.cobas.it/
Email: cobas@cobas.it
Phone: +39 067 759 1926

Coordinamento Migranti UIL, Italy
Website: https://www.uil.it/immigrazione/

Domestic Workers United (DWU), USA
Website: https://www.facebook.com/DomesticWorkersUnited/
Phone: +1 212 481 5747

European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)
Website: https://www.eurovia.org/
Email: info@eurovia.org Phone: +32 2 2173 112

Garment Worker Center, USA
Website: https://garmentworkercenter.org/
Email: gwc@garmentworkercenter.org
Phone: +1 213 748 5866

Justice for Domestic Workers (J4DW), UK
Email: justice4_dw@yahoo.co.uk

Labour Behind the Label, UK
Website: https://labourbehindthelabel.org/
Email: info@labourbehindthelabel.org
Phone: +44 117 954 8011

La Mujer Obrera (LMO), USA
Website: http://www.mujerobrera.org/
Email: info@mujerobrera.org
Phone: +915 217 1135

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), USA
Website: https://www.maldef.org
Email: info@MALDEF.org
Phone: +1 213 629 2512

National Day Laborers Organization Network (NDLON), USA
Website: https://ndlon.org/
Phone: +1 626 799 3566

National LGBTQ Workers Center, USA
Website: https://www.lgbtqworkerscenter.org/

National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (NMASS), USA:
Website: https://nmass.org/
Email: nmassworkerscenter@gmail.com
Phone: +1 212 358 0295

Oficina de Derechos Sociales, Spain
Website: https://odssevillaods.wordpress.com/
Email: ods.sevillla.ods@gmail.com
Phone: +34 658 647 986

Profmigr, Russia
Website: http://www.profmigr.com/

San Diego Maquiladora Workers' Solidarity Network (SDMWSN), USA
Website: http://sdmaquila.org/
Email: maquilatijuanasandiego@earthlink.net
Phone: +1 619 885 6081

Sindacato Intercategoriale Cobas (SI Cobas), Italy
Website: http://sicobas.org/

Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores/as (SAT), Spain
Website: www.sindicatoandaluz.info

SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Russia
Email: mail@sova-center.ru
Phone: +7 495 517 9230

Telco, UK
Website: https://www.citizensuk.org/telco_survey

Territorio Doméstico, Spain
Website: https://www.facebook.com/territoriodomestico/
Email: colectivoterritoriodomestico@gmail.com

Unione Sindacale di Base (USB), Italy
Website: https://www.usb.it/dove-siamo.html

Warehouse Worker's Resource Center, USA
Website: http://www.warehouseworkers.org/

Working Women's Center, Australia
Website: http://www.wwc.org.au/
Email: reception@wwc.org.au

Africa and Latin America

Asociación de Mujeres Unidas Migrantes y Refugiadas de Argentina /

Association of United Migrant and Refugee Women in Argentina (AMUMRA), Argentina
Website: https://amumra.org.ar/

Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU), South Africa
Website: http://www.cosatu.org.za/
Email: donald@cosatu.org.za
Phone: +27 11 339 4911

Migrant Workers Union in South Africa (MIWUSA), South Africa
Website: https://www.miwusa.org.za/index.html
Email: admin@miwusa.org.za
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Website: http://www.cta.org.ar/
Phone: +54 911 4307 3829

Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular (CTEP), Argentina
Website: https://ctepargentina.org/
Email: info@ctepargentina.org
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Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas (MMC), Brazil
Website: https://www.mmcbrasil.com.br/site/
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Work in Freedom

Work in Freedom is an integrated development cooperation programme aiming to reduce vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour of women migrating to garment and domestic work. The programme works along migration pathways in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Jordan, Lebanon and some of Gulf countries. Interventions focus on promoting mobility by choice, fair recruitment to decent jobs, and safety and dignity for migrant workers.

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Click here to find out more about Work in Freedom and its other publications.

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